



What are the attitudes of different age groups towards contributing and benefitting from the wider society and how are these experienced by individuals in those age groups? Looking forward to 2025 and 2040, how might these evolve?

Future of an ageing population: evidence review

What are the attitudes of different age groups towards contributing and benefitting from the wider society and how are these experienced by individuals in those age groups? Looking forward to 2025 and 2040, how might these evolve?

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Executive summary

Introduction

Improving attitudes towards ageing has been seen within policy documents as one means of improving the participation and contribution of older people within society (e.g. World Health Organization, 2002). It is important, therefore, to understand the factors that underpin attitudes towards ageing in order to inform strategies and policies as a foundation for facilitating active participation of older people in society.

Socio-demographic factors such as age, gender and ethnic variation have been seen as **some** of the important predictors to consider when approaching attitudes towards ageing (e.g. Abrams *et al.*, 2011b). However, recent research by Shenkin *et al.* (2014) noted that the mechanisms by which individuals develop perceptions of old age are complex, and it is increasingly understood that this is a more personal and psychological process than was at first conceived. Understanding psychological predictors of attitudes towards ageing along with socio-demographic factors is, therefore, very important, and is a main focus of this report.

The 2002 WHO active ageing policy states **that** policymakers can impact on such psychological factors through the use of both the media and education. This report also evaluates the contribution that traditional and social media have made in this area to explore the potential roles of media and education in framing positive images of ageing in the UK.

Methods

We conducted a computerised search of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on attitudes to ageing. A systematic search yielded 66 articles on attitudes to ageing and 22 studies on age stereotypes in the media.

Key findings

Predictors of attitudes to ageing

- Attitudes to ageing become more negative in the presence of psychological difficulties (e.g. depression and dementia) among older people. However, attitudes to ageing are affected more by perceptions, idiosyncratic appraisals and emotions, rather than the severity of physical symptoms of age-related conditions.
- Healthcare professionals who express high levels of confidence in working therapeutically with older clients and who have more frequent social contacts with healthy older people report more positive attitudes to ageing.
- Tackling ageing anxiety in student populations can be improved through increasing knowledge of ageing and facilitating positive interactions between younger and older people.

Age stereotypes in the media

- There are low levels of coverage of topics related to active ageing in newspapers.
- Older people are under-represented in magazine and TV advertisements.
- There is a low level of coverage of ageing topics in undergraduate and elementary school textbooks.
- There is a lack of research examining age stereotypes in the context of social media.

Conclusions and recommendations

- In order to improve attitudes to ageing in older people, we need to consider optimising opportunities not only for physical health but also mental health, so as to enhance the quality of life as people age. Challenging stereotypes through psychotherapies may promote greater social participation.
- In order to improve attitudes to ageing among healthcare professionals, we need to increase training opportunities with older people in order to increase confidence and to challenge negative stereotypes. This may also facilitate greater inclusion of older people more broadly in society.
- In order to improve attitudes to ageing in younger populations, further research is needed to understand the types of interventions to improve knowledge and better understand what types of contact with older people (and not the quantity of contact) would be most effective in reducing ageing anxiety.
- We need to develop research to understand attitudes towards older people with individuals other than healthcare professionals, particularly policymakers, in order to effect a greater impact on social inclusion and participation of older people in society.
- Researchers need to engage in a dialogue with both social and traditional media to challenge unwittingly negative portrayals of older people. Media campaigns can provide realistic and positive images of ageing, as well as educational information on active ageing, which may be beneficial for both young and old audiences.

I. Introduction

I.1 Selected thematic policy overview

The landmark report *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework* (World Health Organization, 2002) promoted a new paradigm for understanding ageing. The report sought to guide governments and policymakers with regard to developing and implementing policies to promote “active ageing” within societies, defined as a process of optimising opportunities for health in order to facilitate participation in society. Active ageing is a more inclusive concept and encourages an emphasis on enablement in order to facilitate participation.

Since the publication of the report, a number of government and non-governmental organisations/charities (NGOs) supporting older people have considered the importance of attitudes to ageing and social inclusion, in particular Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) and Harrop and Jopling (2009). Both these reports recognised that older people experience age discrimination in their everyday lives. They recognise that negative attitudes towards age contribute towards exclusion and inequality (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2006) and also how older people can ‘absorb’ these prejudices to form internalised negative self-stereotypes, triggering a reduction in expectation for participation (Harrop and Jopling, 2009).

In 2013 the House of Lords Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change published *Ready for Ageing?* This report recognises that increased life expectancy represents progress and can have significant benefits for UK society. However, it concludes that government and society are “woefully underprepared” (House of Lords, 2013: 1) for the UK’s rapidly ageing population. Within the report, attitudes to ageing are considered an important aspect of increasing older people’s participation in society. It suggested that the tendency to view older people as dependent or a burden is inaccurate and unhelpful and fails to recognise the large contribution older people make within society.

The House of Lord’s report *Ready for Ageing?* (House of Lords, 2013) has been followed by two official government responses presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Health in 2013 and 2014. In 2014, the Government response was an update “one year on” and set out actions and reforms to ensure that optimal opportunities for a positive experience of ageing are available to citizens of the UK.

I.2 Socio-demographic factors and attitudes to ageing in the UK

Since 2002, improving attitudes towards ageing have been seen within policy documents as one means of improving the participation and contribution of older people within society. It is important, therefore, to understand factors that underpin attitudes towards ageing in order to inform policies as a foundation for facilitating active participation of older people in society.

In the UK, the government and NGOs have produced a number of reports regarding ageism (e.g. Age Concern Research Services and the University of Kent, 2005; Ray *et al.*, 2006; Abrams *et al.*, 2009, 2011a; Age UK, 2011). The main focus of these reports is on an individual’s view of older people and experiences of age discrimination in the UK. While a full review of these reports is beyond the scope of this paper, it is evident that ageism is consistently reported to be the most commonly experienced form of discrimination in the UK and is often seen to be ‘subtle’ (e.g. showing a lack of respect) or ‘benevolent’ (e.g. viewing

older people as friendly and kind but as less capable). Some reports address positive intergenerational contact as one key to tackle age-based discrimination, but none of the reports provide a comprehensive picture of factors contributing to the forming of such ageist attitudes.

A recently published large European social survey by Abrams *et al.* (2011b) has addressed socio-demographic predictors of attitudes to ageing in the UK. This survey established an association between ageist attitudes and socio-demographic factors in 28 European countries including the UK. Being older, female or having better education were associated with more favourable attitudes towards older people. Being an urban dweller, in work, subjectively poor, or in an ethnic minority group were associated with less favourable views of people aged over 70.

In terms of country-level characteristics, Abrams *et al.* (2011b) found that the populations that held the most positive views of older people in Europe were in countries that had higher GDP per capita and those with later state pension ages. Countries that had a higher proportion of people aged over 65 and those that valued personal autonomy more were also associated with more favourable attitudes.

Based on the projected population by age in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2014a), the pensionable age population will start to outnumber the young population (aged under 16) from 2027, despite the fact that state pension age is expected to continue to rise under the 2011 Pension Act. This may lead to younger people finding themselves part of a smaller minority. Considering these findings together, strategies and policies to improve attitudes towards ageing in the UK may need to target particular sections of the population such as young males in an ethnic minority group.

As seen from the above, socio-demographic factors exemplify important predictors to consider when approaching attitudes towards ageing. However, careful consideration is needed before drawing a more definitive conclusion. For example, according to data from the Office for National Statistics (2014b), the proportion of people living alone increases gradually with age in the UK. Furthermore, those aged 65 and over living alone are more likely to be women (Office for National Statistics, 2014b), and thus older females are expected to be facing more challenging situations related to ageing. However, the study by Abrams *et al.* (2011b) showed that being older and female were associated with more favourable attitudes. This suggests the possibility that there are unexplained factors other than socio-demographics underpinning attitude formation.

Furthermore, recent research by Shenkin *et al.* (2014) noted that the mechanisms by which individuals develop perceptions of old age are complex, and it is increasingly understood that this is a more-personal and psychological process than was at first conceived. Understanding psychological predictors of attitudes towards ageing along with socio-demographic factors is, therefore, very important, and is a main focus of this report.

The 2002 WHO active ageing policy states one of the ways in which policymakers can impact on psychological factors is through both the media and education. Attitudes to ageing are internalised from a very young age, based on an individual's experience of ageing and being with older people. Therefore, exposure to images of ageing during the life course has a potentially significant psychological impact on attitude formation. This report also addresses the psychological effects of the media in framing such attitudes.

1.3 The purpose of this scientific literature review

This literature review explores previously identified psychological predictors of attitudes towards ageing and social participation. It also evaluates the contribution that traditional and social media have made in framing such images of ageing. The report will not only supplement the findings of previous work mainly focused on socio-demographic predictors, but also this understanding will provide a broader foundation for facilitating positive attitudes to ageing in the UK in ways that can enhance active participation of older people more fully in society.

The findings from a preliminary analysis of available evidence revealed a limited number of research studies examining attitudes to ageing being conducted in the UK. Therefore, this report preferentially includes data from the UK but also supplements its findings from international studies in order to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Potential limitations in generalising findings to the UK context will be discussed later in the report.

2. Methods

2.1 Study selection

The SCOPUS database was searched using the terms ‘ageism’, ‘attitude(s) to aging (ageing)’, ‘age stereotype(s)’ and ‘age discrimination’. Full text in PsycINFO and ASSIA databases was searched using the same terms. These searches were conducted on articles published between 1989 and 2014 and for papers in the English language. The results yielded 1,680 articles to be reviewed for relevance. This screening process was conducted by the first author (NK). Applying the following inclusion criteria resulted in the identification of 66 articles on attitudes to ageing and 22 studies on age stereotypes in the media. The list of selected articles was checked by one of the authors (KL). Two authors (NK, KL) read seven papers from the final dataset and completed a data coding form independently in order to ensure accurate understanding of the coding process. The first author (NK) read each study from the final dataset twice and completed the rest of the study characteristic coding.

2.2 Eligibility criteria for studies on attitudes to ageing

2.2.1 Measures of attitudes to ageing

In order to ensure that high-quality data were included in the review, only studies that assessed the level of attitudes to ageing with one of six widely known psychometrically robust self-report measures were included (see details below). This report focused on studies assessing attitudes towards ageing or older people in general, given the length constraint. Studies that involved the manipulation of images of older people (e.g. asking attitudes towards older people with health problems or dementia) were excluded. Table 1 shows a summary of the final dataset using the six measures of attitudes to ageing summarised below.

The Aging Semantic Differential (Rosencranz and McNevin, 1969)

The Aging Semantic Differential (ASD) measures the valences of stereotypic attitudes about age. The ASD requires participants to make ratings of the social object such as ‘older person’ using a seven-point scale for each of 32 bipolar adjectives (e.g. ‘healthy–unhealthy’, ‘productive–unproductive’).

The Attitudes to Ageing Questionnaire (Laidlaw et al., 2007)

The Attitudes to Ageing Questionnaire (AAQ) is a 24-item scale with three sub-domains examining different aspects of ageing: psychosocial loss (e.g. “I do not feel involved in society now that I am older”), physical change (e.g. “I have more energy now than I expected for my age”), and psychological growth (e.g. “As people get older they are better able to cope with life”).

The Fraboni Scale of Ageism (Fraboni et al., 1990)

The Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA) is a 29-item scale assessing three different levels of ageism: antilocution (mere antipathetic talk), discrimination (excluding older people from certain political rights, privileges, employment, or recreational opportunities, etc.), and avoidance (avoiding older people).

The Kogan's Attitudes Toward Old People Scale (Kogan, 1961)

The Kogan's Attitudes Toward Old People Scale (KATOPS) is a 34-item scale assessing general attitudes towards older people across several domains including residence, tension, homogeneity, intergenerational relations, dependence, cognitive style, personality, personal appearance and power. Examples of statements questioned include: "It would probably be better if most old people lived in residential units with people of their own age" and "Most old people get set in their ways and are unable to change".

The Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale (Lawton, 1975)

The five-item 'Attitude Toward Own Aging (ATOA)' subscale of the Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale assess self-perception of ageing, for example: "Things keep getting worse as I get older" and "As you get older, you are less useful".

The Reactions to Ageing Questionnaire (Gething, 1994)

The Reactions to Ageing Questionnaire (RAQ) is a 27-item scale measuring attitudes towards self-ageing by exploring what the person anticipates he or she will be like in old age; for example: "I will regret the loss of strength and attractiveness" and "I won't like growing old".

2.2.2 Study design

Studies employing cross-sectional or longitudinal design were included. Experimental and interventional studies, as well as studies testing the validity and reliability of the scale, were excluded.

Table 1: Summary of final dataset by measures of attitudes to ageing (n = 66)

Measures	No. of studies (no. of UK studies¹)	Characteristics of studies using the scale	Participants' age range²
ASD <i>Rosencranz and McNevin (1969)</i>	7 (2)	<i>The majority of studies used student samples (5/7)</i>	17–80
AAQ <i>Laidlaw et al. (2007)</i>	14 (6)	<i>The majority of studies recruited older people (13/14)</i>	44–109
FSA <i>Fraboni et al. (1990)</i>	18 (0)	<i>The majority of studies used student samples (14/18)</i>	17–89
KATOPS <i>Kogan (1961)</i>	14 (0)	<i>The majority of studies recruited healthcare/educational professionals (7/14), or students (5/14)</i>	18–79
<i>Philadelphia Geriatric Morale Scale: ATOA Lawton (1975)</i>	7 (2)	<i>The majority of studies recruited older people (6/7)</i>	28–93
RAQ <i>Gething (1994)</i>	6 (1)	<i>All studies were conducted in Australia³ The majority of studies recruited healthcare/educational professionals (3/6), or students (3/6)</i>	18–87

Note. ASD = Aging Semantic Differential; AAQ = Attitudes to Ageing Questionnaire; FSA = Fraboni Scale of Ageism; KATOPS = Kogan's Attitudes Toward Old People Scale; ATOA = Attitude Toward Own Aging subscale; RAQ = Reactions to Ageing Questionnaire.

¹ This includes both studies conducted in the UK and cross-cultural studies that involved the UK-based data.

² Some studies did not report age range of participants and thus details provided in this section regarding the participants' age range are based on those that did.

³ This includes two cross-cultural studies involving an Australian sample.

2.3 Eligibility criteria for studies on ageing stereotypes in new and traditional media

Studies involving assessing the proportion and portrayal of older people or ageing in traditional or social media were included. The primary method of analysis employed was, of necessity, content analysis. Table 2 shows a summary of the final dataset by the types of media.

Table 2: Impact of media in studies on age stereotypes (n = 22)

<i>Type of media</i>	<i>No. of studies (no. of UK studies¹)</i>	<i>Outcome investigated</i>	<i>Publication years of media samples examined²</i>
<i>Facebook</i>	1 (0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Portrayal of older people in Facebook groups related to older people (positive or negative)</i> 	NA
<i>Newspapers</i>	2 (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The frequency of coverage of the WHO active ageing framework 2002 and active ageing topics</i> <i>Portrayal of older people (positive or negative)</i> 	1997 to 2013
<i>TV/magazine advertisements</i>	8 (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Proportion of advertisements featured older adult</i> <i>Portrayal of older people (positive or negative)</i> 	1950s to 2013
<i>Educational materials</i>	7 (0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The frequency of coverage and contents of ageing topics</i> <i>Portrayal of older people (positive or negative)</i> 	1879 to 2013
<i>Others (e.g. films)</i>	4 (0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Proportion and portrayal of older people (positive or negative)</i> 	1929 to 2005

¹ This includes both studies conducted in the UK and cross-cultural studies that involved the UK-based data.

² Some studies did not report publication years of media sample examined and thus details provided in this section regarding the publication year range are based on those that did.

3. Results

3.1 Psychological predictors of attitudes to ageing

3.1.1 Preliminary analyses of a dataset of studies on attitudes to ageing

Of the 66 articles identified, six studies (9%) were conducted in the UK, and five (8%) were cross-cultural studies that involved UK-based data. Due to a limited number of studies conducted in the UK, the data presented here preferentially include data from the UK but also supplement findings from international studies in order to provide a more comprehensive perspective. While international literature is of value, the generalisation of findings to the UK context requires careful attention.

Of the 66 articles, 11 studies had addressed the effects of cultural background on attitudes to ageing. Three studies showed no significant cultural effects with regards to attitude formation. Of these three studies, two explored attitudes across different cultural groups living in the same country (Lin and Bryant, 2009; Haboush *et al.*, 2012), whereas the majority of the remaining eight studies, which showed significant cultural differences, recruited participants from different cultural groups residing in their own countries.

The available evidence suggests that a wider cultural context may affect attitudes towards ageing. This indicates not only the importance of further development of the empirical evidence base within the UK but also improved understanding of the effects of ethnic variation within the UK.

Analysis of the populations studied indicated that, of the 66 articles identified, the majority of research was conducted with either student populations (41%) or older adult populations (32%). Healthcare and educational professionals were involved in 18% of studies, and 9% of these were not categorised into any of those populations. Of the articles assigned to the working professional category, 10 articles involved healthcare professionals and two involved educational professionals.

A notable gap in the research on attitudes to ageing is the lack of focus on a wide range of working professionals. The self-report measures of attitudes to ageing reported here have been used mainly to assess age stereotypes in healthcare professionals. Other professionals such as economists, business managers, politicians and policymakers, who may also have a great impact on social inclusion and participation of older people, were not the subject of any identified research. Therefore future research should target these groups.

In our analysis, we investigated studies whose main focus was exploring predictors of attitudes to ageing, for any previously identified psychological predictors. We examined the findings from each study by target samples identified in the previous analysis of the population studied (i.e. older people, healthcare professionals and students). To emphasise the evidence from the UK, we have italicised the citations of UK studies throughout this Results section.

3.1.2 Predictors of attitudes among older people

Our analysis revealed that physical and mental health conditions have been the most studied variables as predictors of age stereotypes in older people (e.g. *Chachamovich et al., 2008*; *Kavirajan et al., 2011*; *Shenkin et al., 2014*; *Trigg et al., 2012*). Generally, better emotional functioning is found to be associated with more positive attitudes to ageing (e.g. *Chachamovich et al., 2008*; *Kavirajan et al., 2011*; *Shenkin et al., 2014*).

For example, *Chachamovich et al. (2008)* showed older people with depression are likely to experience higher levels of negative attitudes as compared to healthy older people. In their study, depression was the strongest predictor of attitudes to ageing while demographic variables such as gender and educational level had small impacts.

Trigg et al. (2012) explored attitudes to ageing in older people with dementia, and showed that people with dementia display a stronger endorsement of negative attitudes than those without dementia. They further examined possible predictors of attitudes among older people with dementia, and showed that awareness of memory problems was a significant predictor of negative attitudes towards ageing. Contrary to expectations, the level of cognitive impairment among older people with dementia was not a significant predictor of attitudes towards ageing.

These findings suggest that older people can become more negative in the presence of psychological difficulties regardless of demographic factors. Furthermore, attitudes to ageing are likely to be more affected by idiosyncratic appraisals, rather than other factors such as physical functioning or the presence of age-related stressful life events (e.g. dementia).

3.1.3 Predictors of attitudes among healthcare professionals

Only a few articles have studied predictors of attitudes towards older people among healthcare professionals. Training variables such as qualifications (*Koder and Helmes, 2008*) and previous education in ageing (*Koder and Helmes, 2008*; *Tomko and Munley, 2013*) were not related to attitudes to ageing in qualified psychologists.

Interestingly, *Koder and Helmes (2008)* showed that fewer years working in psychology and more confidence in working with older clients predict better attitudes towards ageing in psychologists. Interests in aged care as well as more frequent social contacts with healthy older people were found to predict attitudes among medical doctors (*Leung et al., 2011*).

These findings highlight the importance of reconsideration of professional development regarding ageing in healthcare workforces. In attempting to develop programmes to reduce ageist attitudes, the key variables may be those that increase confidence in working with older clients.

3.1.4 Predictors of attitudes among students

Anxiety about ageing such as fear of loss (*Boswell, 2012*; *Allan et al., 2014*) and knowledge about ageing (*Duthie and Donaghy, 2009*; *Boswell, 2012*) are found to be associated with attitudes towards ageing among students. More frequent contact with older people is also found to be associated with positive attitudes.

Duthie and Donaghy (2009) showed previous contact with fit and healthy older people have a positive effect on attitudes. There was no significant relationship between the demographic factor (i.e. students' gender) and their attitudes towards ageing. *Nochajski et al. (2011)* showed

dental students seeing 10 or more older people in the clinic reported more positive attitudes. Again demographic factors (e.g. students' chronological age) were not significantly associated with their attitudes in their study.

Generally, anxiety and knowledge about ageing as well as positive contact with older people seem to predict students' positive attitudes towards ageing. It is important to note, however, that the relationship between those three variables needs extra attention. Allan and Johnson (2009) demonstrated that those students having more factual knowledge of ageing and who interacted with older people several times a day at work had lower levels of ageism. However, this relationship between knowledge and contact with older people, and ageist attitudes, was mediated through the effect of ageing anxiety.

The findings suggest that young adults who are anxious about their own future ageing attribute to older people the negative stereotypes that they fear will describe their future selves (Allan and Johnson, 2009). As the UK's society ages and younger people begin to find themselves part of a smaller minority, this may become a more critical issue.

3.2 Findings on the age stereotypes in media

3.2.1 Social media

Of the 22 articles identified, only one study examined age stereotypes in the context of social networking sites. Levy *et al.* (2014) conducted a content analysis of 84 publicly accessible Facebook groups that concentrated on older individuals. The results revealed that negative age stereotypes were the focus of an overwhelming majority (98.8%) of Facebook group descriptions of older individuals. Those negative descriptions contained texts excoriating older individuals and advocating banning them from various types of public activities. The 84 Facebook groups had a total of 25,489 members and were created by young people.

3.2.2 Traditional media

Of 22 identified articles, 21 studies examined age stereotypes in the traditional media. We provide an overview of the key findings for different types of media.

Newspapers

Two articles were identified in our final dataset. Martin *et al.* (2009) examined the portrayal of older people in articles in *The Economist*, a globally influential economic and political news magazine. Most articles (64%) on older people published between 1997 and 2008 portrayed older people as a "burden on society" and as "frail non-contributors" (Martin *et al.*, 2009). Abdullah and Wolbring (2013) investigated the newspaper coverage of active ageing published between 1980 and 2013 through the lens of key policies such as the 2002 WHO active ageing policy framework. The findings showed no mention of key policy documents and a low level of coverage of active ageing in all six sources from four different countries they covered.

Advertisements

Five studies examined the proportion of advertisements featuring older adults and their portrayal in magazines. Studies showed under-representation of older models in advertisements in mainstream publications (Carrigan and Szmigin, 1999; McConatha *et al.*, 1999; Hurd Clarke *et al.*, 2014). They were more likely to be presented in advertisements in publications designed especially for older people (Carrigan and Szmigin, 1999; Williams *et al.*, 2010). Although fewer older models appeared in magazine advertisements, their portrayal tends to be positive overall (Carrigan and Szmigin, 1999; Williams *et al.*, 2010). Three studies examining TV commercials

showed similar results (Miller *et al.*, 2004; Kessler *et al.*, 2010; Kay and Furnham, 2013). Older characters were disproportionately featured in major roles. However, their depictions were found to be favourable.

Educational books

Four articles were identified, where the main focus was examining the frequency of coverage and contents of ageing topics in textbooks. Although more recent texts tend to cover the topic more comprehensively than in the past (Whitbourne and Hulicka, 1990), the frequency of coverage is still relatively low (O'Neill *et al.*, 2005; Huang, 2011) and the coverage is limited in depth (Whitbourne and Hulicka, 1990). For example, Wellman *et al.* (2004) showed that all 11 textbooks examined discussed health promotion and disease prevention; only seven did so in relation to successful ageing.

Three studies examined the proportion of older adults and their portrayal in children's picture books. Picture books featuring older characters have the potential to reflect and influence current understanding of the ageing process among readers (Crawford and Bhattacharya, 2014). However, the findings from these articles showed that older characters were found to be under-represented (Danowski and Robinson, 2012). Furthermore, children's picture books examined were less likely to provide realistic and positive images of active ageing. For example, Crawford and Bhattacharya (2014) showed that in light of rising retirement ages and improved health of seniors, only 6% of the older characters featured at least one employed grandparent and the majority of these books depicted some form of agricultural labour.

Overall, older people were under-represented across the different media. Topics related to active ageing were notably absent. The available evidence suggests that accessing the media, including educational materials, may not expose the readers to positive images of active ageing.

4. Discussion and conclusion

4.1 Key findings from the scientific literature review and important implications for the participation of older people

Policy initiatives since the publication of *Active Ageing* (World Health Organization, 2002) emphasise changing the image of ageing from a nihilistic narrative framed around older people as a burden on society towards one promoting intergenerational participation. Challenges to negative attitudes of ageing can promote greater participation and a greater recognition of the contribution of older people to society in a virtuous cycle that self-sustains. Nonetheless, work remains to be done on this, as evidenced by the scientific literature.

Evidence from this review suggests that key psychological variables and mechanisms related to age stereotypes may vary across different life stages. This suggests that negative stereotypes about ageing may be challenged at an individual level as people age.

As people age normally without experiencing depression or a dementia, the outcome is more positive (Bryant *et al.*, 2012; Shenkin *et al.*, 2014). Generally, older people report positive attitudes towards ageing and old age. In older people, attitudes to ageing are not defined by chronological age but may be determined by a more personal phenomenological experience of ageing (Diehl and Werner-Wahl, 2010). While attitudes to ageing become more negative in the presence of affective disorders, physical challenges and age-related conditions, data suggests that severity of (age-related) conditions do not predict attitudes to ageing. Interestingly, perceptions and idiosyncratic appraisals are more predictive of attitudes to ageing and more likely to show change from the normative standard. The available evidence suggests a role for existing psychosocial interventions such as cognitive behaviour therapy and the need for development of tailored interventions to target negative attitudes to ageing in older populations.

For healthcare professionals without specialist training in gerontology and geriatrics, there is a danger of under-diagnosis and under-treatment in old people, because of unwitting ageist attitudes (Natan *et al.*, 2013). Healthcare professionals who are more confident in working with older clients and experience more frequent social contact with healthy older people appear to endorse more positive attitudes. Training variables such as previous education in ageing were not a strong predictor. This suggests that, in attempting to develop programmes to reduce ageist attitudes among healthcare professionals, the key variables may be those that increase confidence in working with older clients. In preparing health professionals for the increasing number of older clients, educators need to be mindful of the complexities in attitude formation (Koder and Helmes, 2008). Furthermore, increased opportunities for continued professional development in attitudes to ageing may be important.

Young adults who are anxious about their own future ageing attribute to older people negative stereotypes they fear will describe their future selves (Allan and Johnson, 2009). Evidence suggests that tackling anxiety about ageing by improving knowledge of ageing and facilitating positive interactions between younger and older people can reduce ageist attitudes among these populations. These findings highlight the need for further research to understand the types of programmes needed to improve knowledge acquisition, and especially what types of contact with older people would be most effective in reducing ageing anxiety. More research may also provide insight into the types of policies that would be most effective in reducing negative attitudes towards older people (Allan and Johnson, 2009).

Several notable gaps were identified in the research on attitudes to ageing. More research is needed to understand mechanisms related to age stereotypes in specific professional groups such as economists, business managers, politicians and policymakers, who may also have a great impact on social inclusion and participation of older people.

Another limitation is the lack of studies employing a longitudinal design. Of 66 identified articles, three employed a longitudinal design and 63 were cross-sectional studies. The cross-sectional design allows detecting an association between psychological predictors and attitudes to ageing, but does not state that the latter is caused by the former. Future studies need to consider the use of a more longitudinal design to increase our understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the formation of ageist attitudes and their impacts on social inclusion and participation of older people.

Although the 2002 WHO active ageing policy framework states the importance of work with the media to provide positive images of active ageing, the evidence showed that the coverage of older people and active ageing in the media and educational materials is still scarce. If no action is taken, such exclusion of older people in the media will continue to fuel anxiety about ageing during the life course, and thus reinforce negative ageist attitudes of older people and age discrimination. Researchers will need to engage in a dialogue with both social and traditional media to challenge discrimination towards older people. Media campaigns that aim to provide realistic and positive images of ageing, as well as educational information on active ageing, may be beneficial for both young and old.

4.2 Factors influencing participation of older people in society now, and projections for 2025 and 2040

Consistent with other developed and developing world countries the UK population is ageing. The Office for National Statistics (2014) reported that by 2022, 10% of the population in the UK is projected to be aged 75 and over, compared to 8% in 2012. Demographic forecasts suggest this trend will continue and by 2037 13% of the population will be over 75. The number of people aged 80 or over is projected to more than double while the number of people aged 90 or over is projected to more than triple by 2037. As such, promoting active participation of older people by facilitating positive images of ageing will be a key issue for the UK preparing for an ageing society.

Promoting active participation of older people in society and societal expectations for contributions to society requires a more nuanced understanding of how attitudes to ageing influence behaviour. For instance, older people experiencing conditions commonly associated with ageing, such as dementia, may be at risk of being marginalised as they are less likely to have many opportunities to be invited to contribute to society. However, data reported here suggest that while attitudes to ageing become more negative in the presence of a dementia, this change in attitude is not predicted by severity of cognitive impairment but by the awareness of loss associated with dementia, which acts to reinforce the negative stereotype of ageing (Trigg *et al.*, 2012). This finding would suggest that challenging the stereotype, not necessarily treating the condition, may allow greater participation of all older people.

Knapp and Prince (2007) estimated that there are now 683,597 people with dementia in the UK and this number is forecast to increase to 940,110 by 2021 and 1,735,087 by 2051, an increase of 38% over the next 15 years and 154% over the next 45 years. With these projections, challenging the stereotype among older people experiencing age-related long-term conditions

such as dementia may influence much greater participation of a wider population of older people and not just those considered to be ageing normally.

Active participation of older people in society cannot be achieved without the involvement of younger generations. More frequent exposure to realistic, positive images of ageing and more opportunities for frequent and meaningful contacts with older people through education and media campaigns need to take place in order for an intergenerationally cohesive society to emerge.

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