

Ageless Wisdom: A Cross-Cultural Study on Enhancing Life Satisfaction through Skills Promotion among Older Adults

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Abstract

This article explores the pervasive issue of ageism and its detrimental effects on the elderly population. Ageism or the prejudice and discrimination against older adults based on their age, can have significant impact on their well-being and life satisfaction. However, the article also delves into the potential positive effects of continuous learning on reducing ageism and enhancing the life satisfaction of the elderly. As a proactive approach, lifelong learning presents an opportunity for the elderly to challenge stereotypes, remain engaged in society, and foster personal growth. This study highlights how training and educational programs can empower older adults, instilling a sense of purpose and accomplishment, leading to a more fulfilled and satisfying life in their later years. The main purpose was to investigate how continuous learning affects the lives and life satisfaction perception of elderly people over the age of 65 from Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Turkey after one week and 25 hours of technology, art and psychotherapy trainings that are believed to support them in every aspect of life.

Keywords: Ageism, life satisfaction, lifelong learning, elderly

About the Article

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Introduction

Ageing is a complex process characterized by progressive physiological changes in organisms, leading to senescence—a decline in biological functions and the ability to adapt to metabolic stress (Britannica, n.d.). This biological phenomenon results from the accumulation of molecular and cellular damage over time, leading to a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity, increased disease vulnerability, and ultimately, death (WHO, 2022). However, ageing is not solely a biological process; it is intricately intertwined with social contexts and influenced by various social factors (Ayalon, Tesch-Römer 2018).

Ageism is a form of discrimination and prejudice that targets individuals based on their age (Palmore 1999, p.3-4; Gullette 2017 p. xiii; Macnicol, 2006). It encompasses several aspects, such as stereotyping or discriminating against individuals or groups based on their age, especially older people, and the systemic mistreatment or neglect of the elderly within society or the workplace. Ageism can manifest as denying job opportunities to older job applicants, assuming that older people are incompetent or infirm, or disregarding the valuable contributions of older individuals to society (Hartung, 2018). This discriminatory attitude can have profound consequences not only for older adults but also for younger generations, as it perpetuates negative attitudes and misconceptions about ageing.

In the realm of research, ageism primarily focuses on older people or those in late adulthood (Nelson 2005, Kang, Kim 2022). Ageism can be analyzed through three dimensions: stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (Brinkhof et al., 2022). These dimensions may manifest through unconscious thoughts, feelings, behaviors, or deliberate actions (Iversen et al., 2009). Notably, Paweł Szukalski emphasizes that ageism often stems from the assumption that older people are incapable of fulfilling certain social roles, especially those deemed productive by society (Szukalski, 2008, p. 156). The concept of ageism was introduced by Robert Butler, who likened it to racism and sexism, highlighting the collective threat these prejudices pose to social sustainability (Szukalski, p.157).

Ageism, with a long-standing research tradition, holds a prominent place in the literature. The ever-evolving socio-political and economic landscape necessitates new analytical perspectives to tackle ageism effectively. By understanding ageism's multidisciplinary nature, we can develop comprehensive strategies and terminological approaches to combat this pervasive issue. To date, research has highlighted the pressing importance of addressing ageism in order to promote a more inclusive and age-friendly society.

Successful ageing is not only vital for the individual, but it also has broader societal implications, as ageing-related declines can impact various areas such as functional, social, and financial status, raising significant public health concerns. However, despite its importance, the construct of successful ageing lacks a precise definition in the literature (Simone, Haas & Gomez, 2015, p. 178). Therefore, promoting

integration among older individuals can contribute to a more satisfying and cohesive society.

ACTIVE AGEING

Active aging is a concept that emphasizes optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and safety to enhance the quality of life as people age. With the increasing ageing population, active aging has become more important as individuals seek to maintain independence and engagement in society. The approach recognizes the significance of physical, emotional, and social well-being for older adults, encouraging them to remain active participants in their communities while maintaining their health and overall well-being.

Physical activity plays a crucial role in active aging, as regular exercise has been shown to have numerous benefits for physical health. It can reduce the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers. Additionally, exercise has positive effects on cognitive function, potentially helping to prevent cognitive decline in older adults. Engaging in physical activities can also improve mental health and foster social connections, which are vital aspects of overall well-being. Social engagement is another important aspect of active ageing. Older adults who actively participate in their communities and maintain social connections tend to experience better health outcomes compared to those who are socially isolated. Being involved in community activities, volunteering, and spending time with family and friends can provide a sense of purpose and belonging.

Lifelong learning is also highlighted in the concept of active ageing. Continuously learning new things can help keep the mind sharp and improve cognitive function. It offers a sense of purpose and accomplishment, contributing to a fulfilling life in later years. Lifelong learning can take various forms, from enrolling in classes to learning new skills or pursuing hobbies. By promoting and supporting active ageing, society can enable older adults to maintain their independence and continue making valuable contributions to their communities. Recognizing the importance of physical, emotional, and social well-being for older adults helps create an inclusive and supportive environment where individuals can enjoy a fulfilling life as they age.

The 21st century has been marked by rapid technological advancements, changing demographics worldwide, climate change, and shifts in business organizations. These transformations have necessitated the development of individuals who can adapt quickly to these changes and thrive in an unpredictable future. Training and development have emerged as crucial tools to facilitate this transformation, especially in light of technological developments and increasing competition. In this fast-changing landscape, lifelong education and training have become essential for individuals to cope with the challenges posed by these dynamic shifts. Continuous learning allows people to stay updated with the latest developments, acquire new skills, and remain relevant in their fields. It empowers individuals to take charge of their lives and actively contribute to

society. Moreover, it helps individuals embrace and appreciate cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, fostering a positive and inclusive society.

Positive psychological well-being is highlighted as a valuable resource for older adults in the face of vulnerabilities. Education plays a vital role in maintaining this well-being by providing opportunities for personal growth, intellectual stimulation, and social interaction, all of which contribute to an improved quality of life. The European Commission recognizes education, in its broadest sense, as the key to equipping individuals with the knowledge and understanding needed to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. It is through education that individuals can develop critical thinking skills, adaptability, and resilience to navigate through uncertainties and thrive in a continuously evolving environment.

In conclusion, in the face of technological advancements, shifting demographics, climate changes, and business transformations, training and development are indispensable tools to help individuals adapt, thrive, and contribute positively to society. Lifelong education is essential for individuals of all ages to embrace change, maintain well-being, and meet the challenges of the modern world. Through education, people can acquire the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to navigate a rapidly changing world successfully.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN ELDERLY

The importance of lifelong learning among the elderly is a topic of growing interest and recognition. Researchers and experts have highlighted the benefits of continuous education for seniors in various aspects of their lives. Suryadi et al. (2022) define lifelong education as the ongoing effort of individuals to increase their knowledge and equip themselves through education. It involves using various learning strategies, approaches, and resources to empower the elderly through educational interactions. Lifelong learning has been acknowledged as a powerful tool to combat ageism and promote the well-being of older adults (Field, 2009).

The positive impact of lifelong learning on mental health and cognitive abilities in the elderly cannot be understated. It has been shown to help prevent cognitive decline and stimulate the brain, leading to improved cognitive function (Narushima et al., 2018). Education can also provide seniors with a sense of purpose and fulfillment after retirement, helping them discover and utilize their talents, skills, and qualities (Stankov, 2017).

Lifelong learning is not limited to formal educational institutions but encompasses a wide range of learning experiences, including non-formal and informal learning in various settings such as the workplace and civil society organizations (Soliman et al., 2021). The concept of lifelong learning has gained global recognition and has been integrated into governmental action plans to empower older people, combat ageism, and enhance their self-confidence (Flauziona et al., 2022). Universities and educational institutions have also recognized the need to address the educational needs of older adults. Universities

of the third age and other educational programs for seniors provide spaces and tools to support active ageing, foster social connections, and offer opportunities for lifelong learning (Fragoso and Fonseca, 2022).

Several international plans and declarations, such as the global strategy and action plan on ageing and health, have emphasized the importance of lifelong learning in promoting healthy ageing and ensuring the participation of older people in society (World Health Assembly, 2016). Initiatives by governments and non-governmental organizations aim to encourage seniors to continue contributing their knowledge and expertise through continuous learning, volunteerism, and employment (Singapore Government, 2015).

Overall, the growing recognition of lifelong learning's significance among the elderly highlights the need to develop geragogy models that empower older adults, increase their self-efficacy, and combat prejudices against them (Odinma, 2022). Encouraging lifelong learning for seniors is crucial to promote their overall well-being, social engagement, and active participation in society.

THE AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY (AFU) MOVEMENT

Since its inception in 1973, the University of the Third Age (U3A) has emerged as a prominent organization in the realm of older adult learning. With a remarkable expansion of centers and members worldwide, U3A has played a crucial role in promoting lifelong learning opportunities for seniors (Formasa, 2020). Additionally, the concept of an age-friendly university, pioneered by Dublin City University (DCU) in Ireland, has gained traction. This strategic approach, developed by DCU, aims to incorporate the interests of older adults into the core activities of universities, including teaching, research, and civic engagement (Talmage et al., 2016).

Embracing the responsibility of addressing the ageing population, educational institutions are increasingly recognizing the need to become more age-friendly. This realization has been further emphasized during the pandemic, as institutions strive to provide a diverse and age-inclusive learning environment. Age-friendly universities extend beyond simply catering to older learners; they also promote intergenerational learning, offer opportunities for non-traditional-aged individuals, and foster community dialogue on ageing-related matters (Montepare and Brown, 2022).

The design principles of an age-friendly university, initially formulated by Dublin City University in 2012, offer a comprehensive framework for incorporating older adults into university life. These principles encourage older adults' active participation in educational and research programs, support personal and career development in the later stages of life, recognize diverse educational needs, and promote intergenerational knowledge exchange. Additionally, they emphasize increasing access to online educational opportunities, aligning research with the needs of an ageing society, and raising awareness among students of the importance and complexities of ageing. Moreover, age-friendly universities enhance access to health and wellness programs, engage with

the retired community, and maintain open dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the elderly (Talmage et al., 2016).

Supporting ageing as a component of diversity and inclusion is gaining momentum in higher education environments, reflecting a growing interest in addressing the unique challenges and barriers faced by older adults (Simon et al., 2022). As major educational providers, universities have a significant role to play in adapting to meet the learning needs of seniors and providing appropriate opportunities for lifelong learning (Talmage et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the growing prominence of the University of the Third Age and the concept of age-friendly universities underscore the importance of addressing the educational needs of older adults and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. As the global population continues to age, it is essential for educational institutions to embrace age diversity and create supportive environments that cater to learners of all ages, fostering an inclusive and enriching learning experience for everyone.

Method

The study described below is a by-product of the Erasmus+ project, Wiselife: Raising Awareness about Ageism, which was co-funded by the European Union to promote active ageing and combat age discrimination. Coordinated by Izmir University of Economics in Turkey, WISELIFE brought together partners from Turkey (Bartın University), Italy (I.S.R.A.A), Hungary (University of Szeged), Poland (University of Lodz), and Greece (University of the Aegean).

The primary aim of the project was to raise awareness about ageism and discrimination against the elderly. Unlike other forms of discrimination based on ethnicity or gender, ageing is a universal experience that will likely affect every individual. Thus, activities focusing on ageism and measures to combat age discrimination were deemed crucial not only for specific groups of people but also for the overall well-being of humanity.

As part of the project's five outputs, the second output involved developing a training package for the elderly to promote active ageing. The partners agreed upon a training plan, which was implemented and evaluated through pre-test and post-test assessments. The training sessions took place in Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Italy, and Greece between May and June, 2022.

The training content consisted of three modules: Psychological Wellbeing, Physical Wellbeing, and Technological Wellbeing. Under Psychological Wellbeing, various courses were offered, including Mindfulness, Group Therapy focusing on ageing and ageism, and Art Therapy. Physical Wellbeing courses included Chair Yoga and Meditation, as well as Breathing Exercises. The Technological Wellbeing module covered

courses aimed at creating awareness about cyber-crime, accessing public services online, and the responsible use of social media.

Overall, the training sessions amounted to 25 hours of instruction and were conducted in all partner countries. Out of the 300 trainees who participated in the training, 20 volunteered to take part in the study described in the subsequent sections.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research described in this section utilized a phenomenology design, which is a qualitative research method focused on understanding how participants make sense of their personal experiences and the nature of this sense-making process (Christensen et al., 2015; Patton, 2014). The central aim of phenomenology is to gain insight into human experience and how individuals perceive and interpret a particular phenomenon or concept (van Manen, 2007).

Phenomenology as a qualitative research approach allows participants to express their understanding, emotions, perspectives, and perceptions related to the subject of investigation. It seeks to capture the essence of how individuals experience a phenomenon and how they give meaning to it (Rose, Beeby & Parker, 1995). In this type of research, data is collected from individuals or groups who have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied and can articulate and reflect on their experiences. Not everyone is suitable for participating in phenomenological research, as it requires a willingness and commitment to exploring and expressing personal experiences (Wilson, 2015; Creswell, 2020).

To ensure the purposeful selection of participants, phenomenological studies often involve recruiting individuals who have experienced the specific concept or phenomenon under investigation (Baker, Wuest & Stern, 1992). The research participants' experiences were evaluated using descriptive phenomenology, focusing on the lived experiences of the participants without imposing subjective interpretations from the researchers. This approach aims to provide an in-depth and rich understanding of the phenomenon in hand.

Participants

The study group for this research was determined from the pool of 300 trainees enrolled in the WISELIFE Project. After obtaining ethical approval from the Ethics Committee, the researchers contacted these trainees and invited them to voluntarily participate in the study. Twenty trainees expressed their interest and willingness to participate in the research, forming the study group.

In phenomenology research, the number of participants can vary, and different views exist in the literature. Some scholars, like Dukes (1992) and Polkinghorne (1984), suggest a range of 3 to 25 participants, while Dukes (1984) proposes 3 to 10 participants, and Polkinghorne (1989) recommends 5 to 25 participants. For this

particular study, the researchers conducted interviews with the selected 20 trainees to explore and gain insights into their phenomenological experiences. The participants were from different countries, representing a diverse range of backgrounds and perspectives.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

Participant	Gender	Country
P1	Female	Türkiye
P2	Male	Türkiye
P3	Female	Türkiye
P4	Female	Türkiye
P5	Male	Türkiye
P6	Female	Türkiye
P7	Female	Türkiye
P8	Female	Türkiye
P9	Female	Hungary
P10	Male	Hungary
P11	Female	Hungary
P12	Female	Hungary
P13	Female	Italy
P14	Female	Italy
P15	Female	Italy
P16	Female	Greece
P17	Female	Greece
P18	Male	Greece
P19	Female	Poland
P20	Female	Poland

Data Collection

The data for this research were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted by the researchers involved in the WISELIFE Project. Initially, five open-ended questions were prepared based on expert opinions, and these questions were finalized for the interviews. The researchers conducted interactive interviews with the trainees to obtain in-depth and enriched discourse. They were flexible in their questioning approach and asked additional questions when necessary (Burns & Peacock, 2019). The interviews were conducted one-on-one at mutually agreed-upon times and locations. To overcome language barriers, the interviews were conducted in the participants' mother tongues.

Each interview was video recorded with the participants' consent. Subsequently, the video recordings were translated and transcribed for analysis. The researchers used descriptive analysis within the framework of descriptive phenomenology to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. They read and interpreted the transcriptions, classified

the findings, and presented them in tables. To support the research findings, direct quotations from the trainees' responses were included in the relevant sections of the study. To ensure confidentiality and ethical considerations, each participant was given a code (PT1 to PT20) instead of using their personal information (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

For validity and reliability, the researchers addressed credibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability dimensions. A literature survey was conducted to enhance the believability of the study, and a conceptual framework was developed. Detailed information about the participants and the research process was provided to help readers assess the credibility of the findings. Expert opinions were sought to ensure the research's reliability. The participants were informed about the study's purpose, and confidentiality was emphasized to create a safe and comfortable environment during the interviews. Prolonged interaction with the participants was helpful in obtaining reliable data. To ensure transferability, the interviews and analysis steps were described in detail for readers to understand the research process.

For consistency, face-to-face interviews were recorded, and multiple researchers and experts reviewed the data set to maintain coherence. The researchers ensured that the conclusions drawn from the data were free from personal assumptions and biases. Confirmability was achieved by aligning the study's findings with the literature and presenting them objectively. Figures and accessible language were used to aid comprehension (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical procedures were followed throughout the study. The elderly participants were informed about the ethical considerations, including the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were assured that they could choose not to answer any specific questions without revealing their identity. Confidentiality of the data was maintained, and the study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the coordinating university (Izmir University of Economics).

Findings

In this section, an analysis of the findings obtained through participant interviews will be presented with tables and direct quotations. The participants were given codes representing their origin of country gender as stated below:

TRF: Türkiye/Female
PLF: Poland/Female
ITF: Italy/Female
GRF: Greece/Female
HUF: Hungary/Female

TRM: Türkiye/Male
PLM: Poland/ Male
ITM: Italy/Male
GRM: Greece/ Male
HUM: Hungary/Male

The first question to be answered according to the research problem was “How do you feel in this period of your life?”. Most of the participants reported positive views about their feelings for their present lives.

Table 2. Feelings

How do you feel in this period of your life	Participant Code	F	%
Feeling Positive	TRF1, TRF2, TRF3 TRM1, TRM2, GRF2, PL1, HUM1, ITF3	15	75
Feeling Negative	ITF1	1	5
Feeling Neutral	HUF2	1	5
Depends	HUF1, PL2, ITF2	3	15

Some positive feeling remarks were as follows: “Every age has its own beauty.” or “I have more time for myself”. HUF1 was one of the participants who explained her present feelings about her life in a positive manner:

I can focus on myself a bit more, I have more time for myself, and at this time, I usually organise my things. I look at the books I was presented with at Christmas, later, I plan to sit down and read them. I watch movies, and I try to find out how to please my family.

HUM1 expressed a happy mood as well:

Practically, I had to realise that this has been the most beautiful phase of my life because when I worked, most of the time I was out, and I did not have much time other than for my family. Nowadays, I have taken part in various associations, and I can accomplish lots of things I didn't even know I would be able to.

A participant from Greece expressed his happiness in the context of being busy with his grandchildren:

I am very well, although I was in a pickle, I am perfect now. (...). I have two grand-grand-children and they were at home the day before yesterday, they were very, very good, I played with them like I was a baby too. (GRF1)

Another participant from Greece connected his happiness with his wife:

(...). I'm fine, I have a good wife who plays a big part in this thing, so I'm fine.

The second question to be answered according to the research problem was “When did you first start feeling aged?”. Some of the participants stated that they didn't feel aged (TRF1 TRM1 PLF1 PLF2):

Honestly, I haven't felt anything yet. I'm very sincere. I still feel like I'm 20 years old. I go to concerts; I play music myself. I have a band. I play the guitar. I try to take advantage of opportunities whenever possible. What happened...when I don't do sports, I feel

sluggish, but I realised I couldn't do it and I started taking steps... 10 thousand steps... (TRM1)

Well, I am a senior citizen as it were by age. But youth is no age. So I'm 67, soon I'll be 68. This doesn't mean that I'm old, I'm in good health, I have no health problems, my retirement is good, and I still help seniors who are very ill, even, because they are very ill... (PLF2)

Some participants stated that some physical changes, loss of energy and health problems they experienced made them feel aged:

... there are wrinkles, of course I don't want to intervene... (TRF2)

I had an operation, I asked the doctor why, he said due to age... so I said I was old. When you take the crutch, you reach a turning point in life. The words of my late grandmother came to my mind, I must die standing up without being in someone else's hands, and I accepted old age there. (TRM2)

The first time I felt ageing was when I had to acknowledge that my energies should be well allocated for the 24 hours of the day. Before, I was able to work for 24 hours, but now I must save my strength. The more I want, the less I am able to accomplish. For me, fortunately, ageing now only means that I do not want to do all things at once, and I feel that nobody urges me. So, if I am not able to finish today, I can do so at other times, or I ask someone else to help me out. I do not want to do everything on my own. (HUF1)

The first time I felt ageing was when I was around sixty or later. Before, during my 43-year-long service, I had never gone on sick leave, but after sixty, not too big problems, but some little health issues started appearing. In the first few months right after retirement, I was a bit depressed, so this was the state I soon broke out of, and started to realise how enjoyable a pensioner's life could be. (HUM1)

A participant mentioned some events after which they started to feel aged:

When you lose your mate. But you say I need to be stronger. I need to be self-sufficient. When I lost my Ahmet, I started to think about these things. (TRF3)

The third question to be answered according to the research problem was "What does ageing mean to you?".

Table 3. Definition of Ageing

Definition of Ageing	Participant Code	F	%
Positive Perspective	TRF2, TRF4, GRM1, TRM2, PLF2, HUM1	6	30
Negative Perspective	PL1, TRF1, TRF3, TRM1, ITF3, TRF5, TRF6, HUF2, HUF3	9	45
Neutral	ITF1, ITF2, GRF1, GRF2, HUF1	5	75

Participant expressions for a positive definition of ageing was as follows; “Just getting old in numbers”, “Maturity, becoming more active”, “I feel just like when I was young”, “It is first and foremost life experience, and wisdom”.

HUM1 expressed his positive feelings through the transformation he experienced:

As for me, things seem to be a bit contrary to others, since for me the phase of ageing has become a positive stage of my life, owing to the fact that I have met lots of new friends and participated in numerous events and projects, which formerly I had not had much time for, because besides my work and family, I did not have time left. So ageing is definitely a positive experience for me.

Participant expressions for a negative definition of ageing was as follows:

- Physical changes in appearance,
- Coping with disease,
- Becoming dependent on someone else,
- Low energy, no enjoyment of life, withdrawal into a shell,
- Losing curiosity, self-isolation,
- Pessimism,
- Slight irritability,
- Getting tired easily.

Some participants who define old age from a negative perspective do not experience their old age period in a negative way as they define it through:

My heart is still beating like I'm 20 years old. I go to concerts, I play myself. I have a band. I play the guitar. I try to take advantage of opportunities whenever I can. When I don't exercise, I feel sluggish, but I can't do it. I started taking steps... 10,000 steps....” (TR2M)

HUF2 expressed her opinions about ageing as losing self-reliance and health:

Well, I do not really know what old age is. As long as I can fend and care for myself, as long as I do not have 24-hour pains, I can enjoy my free time, I can go on excursions or holidays, or I can engage myself in handicraft activities, and I do not think about illnesses.

HUF3 emphasized health issues while mentioning being aged:

It means that I am getting 'rich', not financially but having diseases one after another, for example, varicose veins, irregularities in the functioning of the heart. Nevertheless, thanks to God, I do not have brain problems, which I especially pay attention to.

The fourth question to be answered according to the research problem was "Has anything changed in your life before /after the training? How?"

Table 4. *Changes in Life*

Description of change in the participants' life	Participant Code	F	%
Positive Change	TRF1, TRM1, TRF2, TRF3, TRF4, TRF5, TRF6, GR1, GR2, GR3, POLF1, POLF2, HUF1, HUF3, HUM1, ITF2, ITF3	17	85
No change	HUF2, TRM2, ITF1	3	15

It was observed that almost all participants (%85) illustrated that something had positively changed in their lives after training (n=17). Participants stated that they learned new information and life skills that they had never learned before. In addition, many participants stated they were very happy after the training. Some of the participants made the following remarks:

I thought I knew many things, but I learned a lot and gladly went. I learned a lot about how to eat and keep my mood in order. It has helped me a lot. I recommended it to all my friends. (TRF4)

Good. When I arrived, I had reservations. I met you all here, and we had a very, very nice time; I enjoyed myself. I learned how to use the Internet a little bit, a little bit, not much yet, yes, very, very nice, very nice; I mean I understood that we are cared for, we are cared for by our fellow human beings, it doesn't matter that we are grown up people, we were put into a program to learn that which we couldn't learn at home on our own. (GR1)

Another participant added:

Well, this programme helped me in a way that made me realize that I should open to people. I am an extremely reserved person. I have a lot of hobbies that I enjoy. Well, the programmes I attended made me aware of the fact that we need to meet others, to get

acquainted with others, and to attend various events, which is only possible if you live behind the walls of your home. No matter how I am, sometimes I must move out of my room. Many programmes gave me the opportunity to do so, for example, in the small groups where I could make friends with people I had not met before. Or I was able to travel to lands in my imagination, or be at an event, where I will never visit but I can see the world, or at least a little corner of it through others' experiences and reports. (HUM1)

Some participants stated that their training, especially on technology, made their lives easier. For example:

I attended all sessions of the training, I had not had too much expectation, because I did not know what exactly it would give me. Nevertheless, I am very happy that I did participate, because, for example, related to holidays, we watched travel and photo reports, which I especially like since I myself like travelling as well, so one of the positive outcomes was that I got inspired by what my next destination could be. Not to mention the training part, which was offered by an information technology expert who has been the best teacher in my life, so to speak. Formerly, I was a bit resistant to smart phones and computers, but the training sparked something in me, and now, I got to the point when, with the help of my son, I started using them. (HUF3)

Few participants (%15) stated that there was no change in their lives after the training they received (n=3). One of the participants stated:

Can I be honest? I would say no. I mean, they always increase the knowledge and skills that one may have. But at my age ... you know how many I have, right? So let's take a guess, next month, I do eight- two. (ITF1)

Another participant said:

It did not meet my expectations. I came with much bigger dreams. What I was told and what I saw there were very different. Or our group was different. It was not a place for conversation, not a barren golden day. It's about the standards of the participants. I completed all my scans and added something in the middle. There were police friends. Or, because law is my field, it seemed very simple to me. There is nothing like this in Turkey; it happens in American movies. I wouldn't say I like to chase raw dreams. (TRM2)

The fifth question to be answered according to the research problem was "Have you ever experienced ill-treatment, discrimination, or disadvantage because of your age?". The results of this question are shown in the table below.

Table 5. Ageism Experiences

Experiencing any ill treatment, discrimination or disadvantage	Participant Code	F	%
Yes, I have experienced	TRM1, TRF3	2	10
No, I have not experienced	TRF1, TRM2, TRF2, TRF4, TRF6, GR2, GR3,	15	75

Traumatic/Domestic Violence	POLF1, POLF2, HUF1, HUF2, HUF3, HUM1, ITF2, ITF3 ITF1, GR1, TRF5	3	15
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It was found that only a few of the participants (%10) indicated that they had experienced ill-treatment, discrimination, or disadvantage because of their age (n=2). Some of the participants made the following remarks regarding this subject:

There was a woman in trauma recently. I said don't do it... Recently, trauma, izban metro was very good... I said no, ma'am, I forced her to sit there. I still feel young. Little things happen. We do a check-up. So it is. (TRM1)

For example, years ago everyone used to call me sister. A lady at the cottage started calling me auntie. 10 or 12 years ago they had big kids. The one who calls her aunt has a son and grandson. Another neighbor said how can she be your aunt? Anyway, she gave up. Let's let her say it, everyone... one more... get in my pocket... 77 started it. Anyway, let them say I'm used to it... Of course, I don't want fat, lumbering, self-abandoned people with grandchildren... My children also tease me. (TRF3)

Some respondents (%15) reported that they had experienced traumatic problems or domestic violence when they were young; however, these were not related to the issue of age-related ill-treatment, discrimination, or disadvantage (n=3). Some of the participants made the following remarks regarding this subject:

No, at age no, but a little bit yes when I was young, a traumatic experience unfortunately. (ITF1)

Look, I felt a little bit of abuse from my husband, that, he was a little bit strange, but he was a good man but not that. Discrimination no, I don't think I felt any discrimination, no, not in my work, not in my social life, no, no, I never felt discrimination. (GRE1)

I've been through a lot. Violence is what I want to use as an example. Discrimination, for example, how can I say? Unrest. So I can't really say. I've had terrible experiences. (TRF5)

It was observed that almost all participants (%85) stated that participants emphasized that they have not experienced ill-treatment, discrimination, or disadvantage because of their age (n=15)

One of the participants mentioned:

Thankfully I haven't experienced it yet. Hopefully, I will not experience this in the future. (TRF6)

Another participant said:

No, I mean, for example, no, I haven't had anything like that happen to me, that someone told me you're old or there, you don't know anything or something. (POLF1)

One of the participants stated:

I consider myself lucky in this aspect as well. It may be because I move out little into the outer world, I have never been a victim or target of discriminative acts or ill-treatment. I would not say that just because of my age, I have suffered disadvantages. (HUF3)

Results and Discussion

This article has explored ageing as a biological and social process, as well as the detrimental effects of ageism on individuals and society as a whole. Understanding and addressing ageism is vital for fostering a society that values and respects individuals of all ages. By dismantling ageist attitudes and practices, we can pave the way for a more equitable and supportive environment for both current and future generations.

In conclusion, this journal article has shed light on the critical issue of ageism and its impact on the lives of older adults. Ageism, fueled by negative stereotypes and discrimination, can have far-reaching consequences on the psychological and social well-being of the elderly. However, there is hope in the form of continuous learning and educational opportunities, which have emerged as powerful tools to combat ageism and enhance the life satisfaction of older individuals.

Lifelong learning presents a proactive and transformative approach to empower the elderly, providing them with opportunities to challenge ageist beliefs and remain active participants in society. By engaging in diverse educational programs, older adults can break free from the shackles of age-related biases and discover new avenues for personal growth and self-improvement.

The positive effects of continuous learning on ageism are multi-faceted. Education equips older adults with knowledge and skills that enable them to maintain their independence, self-confidence, and resilience. Engaging in learning activities also fosters a sense of purpose and accomplishment, combating feelings of social isolation and irrelevance. As older adults become active participants in educational settings, they become ambassadors for change, challenging ageist perceptions and promoting intergenerational understanding and cohesion.

Moreover, the findings suggest that training and educational programs tailored for the elderly can significantly contribute to enhancing life satisfaction. By acquiring new knowledge and skills, older individuals feel a renewed sense of purpose and relevance in their lives. Lifelong learning also creates opportunities for social interaction, building new relationships and support networks, which are vital for overall well-being.

In conclusion, this article highlights the transformative potential of continuous learning in shaping a more inclusive and age-friendly society. By recognizing the value of lifelong learning for the elderly, we can work towards dismantling ageism and promoting a culture that values and respects individuals of all ages. By embracing lifelong learning as a societal norm, we can unlock the full potential of older adults and enrich the lives of future generations.

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Bu makale, yaygın bir sorun olan yaş ayrımcılığını ve bunun yaşlı nüfus üzerindeki zararlı etkilerini incelemektedir. Yaşlı yetişkinlere karşı yaşlarına dayalı önyargı ve ayrımcılık olan yaşçılık, yaşlı bireylerin refahını ve yaşam memnuniyetini önemli ölçüde etkileyebilir. Bununla birlikte, makale aynı zamanda sürekli öğrenmenin yaş ayrımcılığını azaltma ve yaşlıların yaşam memnuniyetini artırma üzerindeki potansiyel olumlu etkilerini de incelemektedir. Proaktif bir yaklaşım olarak yaşam boyu öğrenme, yaşlıların kalıp yargılara meydan okuması, toplumla bağlarını sürdürmesi ve kişisel gelişimlerini desteklemesi için bir fırsat sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, eğitim ve öğretim programlarının yaşlı yetişkinleri nasıl güçlendirebileceğini, bir amaç ve başarı duygusu aşılıyarak ilerleyen yaşlarında daha tatmin edici ve doyurucu bir yaşam sürmelerini sağlayabileceğini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışmanın temel amacı, Yunanistan, Macaristan, İtalya, Polonya ve Türkiye'den 65 yaş üstü yaşlıların, yaşamın her alanında kendilerini destekleyeceğine inanılan bir haftalık ve 25 saatlik teknoloji, sanat ve psikoterapi eğitimlerinin ardından sürekli öğrenmenin yaşamlarını ve yaşam memnuniyeti algılarını nasıl etkilediğini araştırmaktır.

Aktif yaşlanma, insanlar yaşlandıkça yaşam kalitesini artırmak için sağlık, katılım ve güvenlik fırsatlarını optimize etmeyi vurgulayan bir kavramdır. Yaşlanan nüfusun artmasıyla birlikte, bireyler bağımsızlıklarını ve topluma katılımlarını sürdürmeye çalıştıkça aktif yaşlanma daha önemli hale gelmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, yaşlı yetişkinler için fiziksel, duygusal ve sosyal refahın önemini kabul etmekte ve onları sağlıklarını ve genel refahlarını korurken toplumlarında aktif katılımcılar olarak kalmaya teşvik etmektedir.

Elimizdeki çalışma, aktif yaşlanmayı teşvik etmek ve yaş ayrımcılığıyla mücadele etmek amacıyla Avrupa Birliği tarafından ortaklaşa finanse edilen Wiselife: Raising Awareness about Ageism adlı Erasmus+ projesinin bir ürünüdür. Türkiye'de İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi tarafından koordine edilen WISELIFE, Türkiye (Bartın Üniversitesi), İtalya (I.S.R.A.A), Macaristan (Szeged Üniversitesi), Polonya (Lodz Üniversitesi) ve Yunanistan'dan (Ege Üniversitesi) ortakları bir araya getirdi. Bu araştırma için çalışma grubu, WISELIFE Projesine kayıtlı 300 katılımcıdan oluşan havuzdan belirlenmiştir. Etik Kurul'dan etik onay alındıktan sonra araştırmacılar bu kursiyerlerle iletişime geçerek onları çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmaya davet etmiştir. Yirmi katılımcı araştırmaya ilgi duyduklarını ve katılmaya istekli olduklarını ifade ederek çalışma grubunu oluşturmuştur.

Sürekli öğrenmenin yaş ayrımcılığı üzerindeki olumlu etkileri çok yönlüdür. Eğitim, yaşlı yetişkinleri bağımsızlıklarını, özgüvenlerini ve dayanıklılıklarını korumalarını sağlayan bilgi ve becerilerle donatır. Öğrenme faaliyetlerine katılmak aynı zamanda bir amaç ve başarı duygusunu teşvik ederek sosyal izolasyon ve ilgisizlik duygularıyla mücadele eder. Yaşlı yetişkinler eğitim ortamlarında aktif katılımcılar haline geldikçe, değişimin elçileri haline gelmekte, yaşçı algılara meydan okumakta ve nesiller arası anlayış ve uyumu teşvik etmektedirler. Ayrıca bulgular, yaşlılara yönelik eğitim ve öğretim programlarının yaşam memnuniyetini artırmaya önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunabileceğini göstermektedir. Yeni bilgi ve beceriler edinen yaşlı bireyler, yaşamlarında yenilenmiş bir amaç ve alaka

duygusu hissederler. Yaşam boyu öğrenme aynı zamanda sosyal etkileşim için fırsatlar yaratmakta, genel refah için hayati önem taşıyan yeni ilişkiler ve destek ağları kurmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak bu makale, daha kapsayıcı ve yaş dostu bir toplumun şekillendirilmesinde sürekli öğrenmenin dönüştürücü potansiyelini vurgulamaktadır. Yaşlılar için yaşam boyu öğrenmenin değerini kabul ederek, yaş ayrımcılığını ortadan kaldırmak ve her yaşta bireye değer veren ve saygı duyan bir kültürü teşvik etmek için çalışabiliriz. Yaşam boyu öğrenmeyi toplumsal bir norm olarak benimseyerek, yaşlı yetişkinlerin tam potansiyelini ortaya çıkarabilir ve gelecek nesillerin yaşamlarını zenginleştirebiliriz.

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