A STUDY ON INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ELDER RIGHTS
Socio-legal Challenges and Solutions in Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Advocating for elder rights is essential in an ageing world. This study examines how intergenerational dynamics shape perceptions and actions surrounding these rights. It analyses the impact of social, economic, cultural, and technological forces, alongside generational experiences, on differing viewpoints. This study compares how Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z understand and experience older rights. This study explores contrasting values regarding financial security, healthcare access, abuse protection, and societal ageism. Additionally, it will investigate the intergenerational dynamics in elder rights advocacy within families, communities, and policies. The goal is to identify the challenges older adults face, understand how different generations prioritise their rights, and propose strategies to foster collaboration for a more just treatment of seniors. Beyond identifying these challenges, this study proposes concrete strategies designed for real-world implementation. The goal is to shape better policies and foster intergenerational understanding, leading to measurable improvements in senior citizens' treatment. The data were collected from 112 people using a Survey. The gathered data were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. A mixed-methods approach that combines interviews, surveys, and policy analysis illuminates these multifaceted intergenerational perspectives. The study revealed significant generational differences across various aspects. The research showed notable discrepancies between different generations in several areas. These variances were evident in viewpoints, beliefs, and reactions to issues regarding the rights of the elderly. This highlights the significance of comprehending intergenerational relationships in tackling the socio-legal obstacles encountered by senior citizens.

Keywords: Elder rights, Intergenerational perspectives, Ageism, Socio-economic factors.

Introduction

Protecting the rights and well-being of older adults is a major challenge in our ageing societies. With shifting demographics and longer life expectancy, addressing the complex social and legal issues affecting seniors becomes more urgent. Ageism, elder abuse, and systemic barriers often come together to create a situation where the rights of our elders are at risk. To tackle these challenges and understand how society responds, we must look at different generations'

views on ageing, expectations for elder care, and the legal safeguards necessary to protect elder rights.

In this study, we look at the important connection between these issues. We will explore the particular social and legal obstacles that older adults encounter, examining how relationships between different generations, influenced by elements such as culture and family setup, impact beliefs and behaviours regarding elder rights. We will investigate possible resolutions, focusing on initiatives that promote cooperation between age groups. A key objective of this study is to push for a change in perspective, highlighting the importance of listening to the older generation and integrating a dedication to elder rights into our society and laws. A significant barrier to securing elder rights is the pervasive issue of ageism. This socially constructed prejudice creates a cascade of disadvantages. Age-based stereotypes seep into all corners of society, from the workplace to healthcare settings (Butler, 2020). These stereotypes fuel a perception of older adults as less capable, less valuable, and ultimately, less deserving of protection and respect. Within this context, various forms of elder abuse and neglect thrive. Physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse pose a devastating and often under-reported threat to seniors (Dong et al., 2015). The societal devaluation of the elderly diminishes the urgency of addressing these abuses and creates blind spots within the support system. Adding further complexity, older adults often find their legal rights undermined by discriminatory practices or outright neglect. Whether facing age-based barriers in employment, challenges accessing adequate healthcare, or institutional roadblocks when attempting to seek justice, seniors can be marginalized by systems meant to protect all citizens (Ayalon et al., 2016). Legal reforms are urgently needed to ensure that as people age, they do not become less protected by the laws designed to safeguard basic human dignity and equality. The attitudes and actions societies take to address these challenges are heavily influenced by how different generations view the ageing process itself. Intergenerational solidarity theory reminds us that the well-being of our elders is inextricably linked to their relationships within families and the wider society (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). Studies demonstrating how perceptions of ageing and elder care obligations shift across cultures, generations, and socioeconomic groups are critical to understanding where support systems break down (Silverstein & Giarrusso, 2010).

Next, the design of the study is described, namely a research question, description of participants, data collection tools and analysis. This is followed by the presentation of the results of the study. The article closes with a discussion and conclusions.

Review of literature

I. Ageism: The Root of Elder Rights Challenges

Ageism, as defined by Robert Butler (2020), is a systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against individuals based on their age. While it can target any age group, ageism is most pervasive in attitudes towards older persons. It manifests in subtle biases and outright discrimination across various aspects of life, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and others based solely on age. Ageism has far-reaching and detrimental consequences. Ayalon and Tesch-Römer (2017) emphasize that ageist attitudes internalized by seniors can lead to negative self-perceptions, reduced self-efficacy, and poorer mental and physical health outcomes. Externally, ageism leads to social isolation by limiting older adults' opportunities for engagement and participation. Moreover, as North & Fiske (2012) demonstrate, ageism restricts access to essential resources, including healthcare, employment, and social services. There is an intrinsic connection between ageism and the increased risk of elder abuse. Yon et al. (2017) assert that ageist attitudes, by devaluing older adults, diminish the respect and dignity afforded to them, desensitizing society towards neglect and various forms of mistreatment.

II. Elder Abuse: A Spectrum of Violations

Elder abuse encompasses a range of harmful acts as outlined by the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA, n.d.). These include physical abuse (intentional infliction of pain, injury, or impairment), psychological/emotional abuse (inflicting mental anguish through threats, verbal aggression, humiliation, and isolation), financial abuse (illegally or improperly exploiting an older adult's resources, assets, or property), sexual abuse (non-consensual sexual contact or activities), and neglect (failure by a caregiver or responsible person to provide necessities like food, shelter, hygiene, and medical care). Understanding the complex interplay of risk factors underpinning elder abuse is crucial. The World Health Organization (2021) highlights a range of factors increasing vulnerability, including individual factors (like increased dependency and impairments), caregiver-related factors (like stress and lack of support), and societal factors (like ageism and inadequate support services). Elder abuse is notoriously underreported, with estimates suggesting a significant gap between prevalence and cases officially identified (Lachs & Pillemer, 2015). Reasons for this underreporting include fear of retaliation, shame, dependence on the abuser, and impaired cognition.

III. Evolving Challenges to Elder Rights

Despite existing legal frameworks, many countries struggle to guarantee fundamental rights and protections for older adults. Human Rights Watch (2018) exposes instances of age-based discrimination in key areas like employment, denying older adults equal opportunities to contribute to the workforce. Access to essential services can also be restricted, and age can play a negative role in decision-making about healthcare or even legal guardianship. Ageism is embedded within healthcare systems, impacting the quality of care older adults receive. Banerjee (2020) discusses how it leads to reduced quality of care, including undertreatment or overtreatment based on assumptions about age, and reduced access to appropriate and timely treatment. Seniors are also prime targets for financial exploitation. James et al. (2014) highlight that age-related vulnerabilities, like cognitive changes and social isolation, make older adults susceptible to scams, predatory lending practices, and financial abuse by family members. Neglect and substandard care within long-term care facilities and other institutions constitute another form of abuse (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003). This can manifest as inadequate staffing, poorly trained personnel, disregard for residents' basic needs and dignity, and failure to provide necessary medical care and support.

IV. Intergenerational Dynamics: Perspectives and Conflicts

The well-being of older adults is intimately tied to their relationships within families and the broader society. Intergenerational solidarity theory (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991) provides a framework for understanding these relationships, emphasizing components like reciprocity (exchange of support), affection (emotional bonds), and consensus (shared values). It's crucial to examine how these elements influence attitudes about elder care in different cultures and family structures. Studies focusing on potential disagreements between generations around elder rights issues can illuminate crucial areas of conflict. These disagreements might stem from contrasting views on whether caring for seniors a familial duty or a larger societal responsibility is primarily. Differing priorities in financial resource allocation may also lead to tensions, with generations disagreeing on whether a larger portion should be dedicated to elder needs versus other social concerns. Even the understanding of what constitutes elder neglect and how urgently it must be addressed can differ between generations.

Technology plays a significant and complex role in shaping intergenerational relationships and their impact on elder care. Research highlights both its potential for greater connection and the risk it poses in exacerbating isolation. On the positive side, technology bridges communication gaps, enables remote support, and facilitates virtual interactions for seniors who may have mobility limitations. However, a reliance on technology risks increasing isolation for

elders who are not tech-savvy, further diminishing in-person interactions and emphasizing the digital divide that exists between generations.

V. Strategies for Change: Intergenerational Collaboration

To combat ageism and promote a more just and equitable approach to elder rights, it's vital to explore models of intergenerational collaboration. Beyond merely mentioning intergenerational programs, provide specific examples and case studies that demonstrate their impact. These could include shared living or housing models where seniors and younger adults cohabit for mutual benefit. Mentorship programs that pair older adults with younger generations for knowledge and skill exchange offer opportunities for mutual learning and combating ageist stereotypes. Intergenerational community initiatives addressing broader social issues provide a collaborative platform and contribute to the breaking down of generational silos.

The transformation of elder care necessitates a critical analysis of existing models and a greater exploration of person-centred approaches. The Green House Project, with its focus on small, home-like care settings, challenges traditional institutional models. The Eden Alternative philosophy tackles loneliness, helplessness, and boredom often prevalent in long-term care environments. As technology plays an increasing role in elder care, it's crucial to evaluate its benefits (like remote monitoring and assistive technologies) alongside ethical considerations about privacy and the potential to replace human connection.

VI. The Impact of Elder Rights on Societal Well-being

The protection of elder rights extends beyond ensuring justice for a particular age group – it has profound implications for the overall health and well-being of society. Research focusing on the link between elder rights and broader social indicators highlights these crucial connections. When older adults experience discrimination, social isolation, and a lack of opportunities, it undermines social cohesion and inclusion. By ensuring elder rights, we foster a society where seniors are valued, respected, and fully integrated into all aspects of life. Additionally, older adults hold immense cultural knowledge, life experiences, and skills. When their contributions are marginalized or their wisdom undervalued, we deprive ourselves of invaluable resources and the potential for rich intergenerational exchange.

Furthermore, research demonstrates a strong correlation between protecting elder rights and improved mental health outcomes for seniors. Reducing ageism, combating elder abuse, and guaranteeing elder-friendly environments contribute to decreased stress, an increased sense of security, and overall well-

being. Elder rights also have economic implications. Ageist employment practices deprive society of skilled and experienced workers, shrinking the available workforce and limiting economic growth. Financial abuse against seniors not only harms individuals but can also strain social support systems and burden taxpayers. Conversely, investing in elder-inclusive policies promotes a more productive, resourceful, and equitable society across the entire lifespan.

Research Methodology

Objectives

- To identify and analyse generational differences (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z) in perceptions of elder rights, including financial security, access to quality healthcare, protections against abuse, and societal ageism.
- To compare how each generation prioritizes legal and societal interventions aimed at upholding elder rights.
- To explore intergenerational dynamics surrounding elder rights advocacy, examining potential collaborations or conflicts within families, communities, and wider policy implementation.
- To understand the distinct challenges faced by older adults and how they might be perceived differently across generations.
- To develop actionable recommendations that foster intergenerational empathy and cooperation to achieve more equitable treatment of older adults.

Type of Study

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This integrated design allows for a nuanced understanding of the complex societal attitudes surrounding elder rights, as well as measurable comparisons across different generations:

Qualitative: In-depth interviews will be conducted to explore individual experiences, perspectives, and narratives regarding elder rights.

Quantitative: A survey will collect data to statistically analyse generational differences in attitudes, beliefs, and priorities regarding elder rights.

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure a diverse and representative sample across the four generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Additionally, the sample will be balanced to reflect the approximate gender distribution in India. This method involves:

Defining Strata: Dividing the target population into groups by generation, gender, and potentially economic hardship categories based on qualitative insights.

Determining Sample Size Proportion: Proportions within each stratum will be determined to ensure the representation of relevant demographic groups.

Random Selection: Within each stratum, participants will be randomly selected.

Sample Size

This study aims to recruit a sample size of 110-120 participants that accurately represent the demographics of the Indian population. To achieve this, a stratified random sampling method will be used. Here's how the sample will be proportionally divided:

Gender: The sample will strive to reflect the approximate gender distribution in India:

Female: 50.9%

Male: 46.4%

Other: 2.7%

Age: Participants will be recruited from the following age groups to reflect the population distribution:

18-24 years old: 17.9%

25-34 years old: 8.9%

35-44 years old: 13.4%

45-54 years old: 17.9%

55-64 years old: 19.6%

65+ years old: 22.3%

Data Collection Method and Tool

A self-administered online survey was created as the primary data collection method. The survey was designed using Google Forms. For enhanced representativeness, a random sampling technique was used. The survey link was distributed through various WhatsApp groups and communities. Participants were approached in public places and requested to complete the survey, A total of 112 individuals completed the survey. To obtain relevant data the following questions were asked:

Data Analysis and Interpretation

To gain insights from the collected data, Two-pronged approach: qualitative and quantitative analysis. First, significant portions of the data were transcribed into a computer program (like Microsoft Word and Excel). These transcripts were then reviewed multiple times to identify recurring themes and common ideas, then coded these themes, refining and revising them as needed. Highlighting tools were used to categorize the data and record observations. Finally, quantitative analysis was performed, which involved counting responses and calculating percentages to identify trends. This combined approach provided a well-rounded understanding of the collected data. A thorough analysis of the data yielded the following thematic categories: Individual and Societal Influences, The Changing Landscape of Care, Advocacy and Solutions, Collaboration and Challenges.

Based on the survey data, it's evident that economic conditions during the formative years have significantly influenced the perspectives on elder rights and societal structures. With 40% of respondents describing the economic conditions as "very difficult" and an equal 40% indicating that these conditions significantly influenced their views on elder rights, it's clear that challenging economic circumstances often lead individuals to develop heightened awareness and concern for issues such as elder rights.

Regarding cultural values shaping views on elder rights, independence and self-reliance emerge as predominant factors, with 54% of respondents reflecting their influence. This suggests that cultural values emphasising personal autonomy and independence play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards elder rights.

Moreover, technological advancements have had a profound impact on interactions with older generations and their rights. While 70% of respondents believe that technology has facilitated access to information, only 44% indicated elder-friendly attitudes towards technology. This indicates a potential gap between the adoption of technology and the comfort level of elder individuals with it.

In terms of intergenerational collaboration, the data underscores both the potential and challenges. While 62% of respondents acknowledge generational differences in attitudes towards elder care within families, only 13% suggest strategies for effective collaboration, such as mutual respect, understanding, and intergenerational dialogue.

Furthermore, conflicts and challenges are prevalent in intergenerational work environments, as indicated by 75% of respondents affirming their occurrence. This underscores the need for improved communication and understanding among different age groups in addressing socio-legal challenges related to elder rights.

Considering the data, it's evident that there's room for improvement in fostering better understanding and cooperation between generations in addressing elder rights issues. Education and awareness campaigns, intergenerational dialogue forums, and policy reforms promoting inclusivity emerge as potential strategies, with 47% of respondents supporting their efficacy.

Legal frameworks also play a crucial role in protecting the rights of older adults in contemporary society. Strengthening anti-discrimination laws, enhancing elder abuse protections, and implementing age-friendly policies are key areas identified for adaptation, with 44% of respondents indicating support for implementing age-friendly policies.

Overall, the data highlights the complexity of addressing elder rights issues in today's society, underscoring the importance of bridging generational gaps, leveraging technology effectively, and advocating for inclusive legal frameworks to ensure the well-being and rights of older adults are upheld.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research findings illuminate the complex interplay of economic hardship, cultural values, technology, and intergenerational dynamics that shape perspectives on elder rights in India. A strong correlation emerges between past economic difficulties and a heightened concern for elder rights. This suggests those who experienced disadvantage are more likely to advocate for robust support systems to protect the elderly. The dominance of the "Respect for Elders" theme underscores the influence of tradition, while the less frequent emphasis on independence hints at potential shifts in care models among younger generations.

Technology is perceived as a double-edged sword. While a majority recognize its potential benefits for information access and advocacy, there are concerns about its potential to increase isolation. This highlights the need for bridging the digital divide for seniors. A significant portion of the data points to generational differences in attitudes towards elder care and highlights a lack of strategies to navigate these differences. Importantly, workplace conflict across generations appears common, underscoring a widespread need for improving intergenerational understanding and collaboration.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations can foster more just and equitable treatment of older adults in India:

- **Targeted Economic Support:** Policies aimed at alleviating economic hardship, particularly for vulnerable elderly populations, are crucial in addressing the root causes of elder rights concerns. Strategies like pension plans, subsidised healthcare, and housing assistance require attention.
- **Cultural Awareness Campaigns:** Public awareness initiatives should promote respect for the elderly while encouraging dialogue around evolving care expectations. These campaigns must challenge ageist stereotypes and highlight the diverse needs of seniors without undermining traditional values.
- **Digital Literacy for Seniors:** Targeted programs should promote digital literacy among the elderly, ensuring they can access online resources, stay connected, and advocate for themselves. Technology should be an empowering tool, not a source of isolation.
- **Intergenerational Mentoring and Dialogue:** Structured programs should facilitate intergenerational knowledge sharing and combat ageism in workplaces and communities. This could involve seniors mentoring younger generations and vice versa.

- **Elder-Inclusive Policymaking:** Policies at all levels (local to national) must prioritize the needs of an ageing population. Review of laws, healthcare accessibility, and long-term care options should be undertaken with elder rights and dignity at the forefront.

Future Research

The study's limitations should inform future research directions:

- **More Focused Regional Studies:** Replicating this research on a state-specific or regional level would expose differences in attitudes based on local social and economic contexts.
- **Qualitative Exploration of Generational Care Expectations:** In-depth interviews could offer a deeper understanding of how caregiving expectations and responsibilities shift between generations.
- **Policy Analysis:** An evaluation of existing policies protecting elder rights is necessary to identify gaps and recommend specific reforms.

By addressing economic disadvantage, bridging generational gaps, and adapting both societal attitudes and legal frameworks, India can move towards a future where elders not only survive but truly thrive.

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