Ageism in the eyes of Gen z - Perspectives and Strategies

Anuradha Shetty[1], Preeti Fernandes[2], Supriya M A[3]

[1] *Assistant Professor, P.G Dept of Social Work, School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore, India.*

[2,3] *Students, Masters in Social Work (MSW), School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore, India.*

Abstract—**Ageism, or discrimination based on age, affects individuals of all ages and backgrounds. This study explores ageism through the unique lens of Generation Z (Gen Z) in an age-diverse world. Our research examines Gen Z's perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards ageism and proposes solutions for addressing this issue. Through the questionnaire with the online process, we have gathered data from a diverse sample of Gen Z individuals. Our findings came from the need for augmented intergenerational understanding, education, and empathy. We propose solutions such as age-inclusive education programs, mentorship initiatives, and social media campaigns to promote positive representations of age diversity. By amplifying Gen Z's voices and perspectives, this study contributes to developing strategies for combating ageism and fostering a more inclusive society for all ages.**

Index Terms—**Ageism, Gen Z, Old Age, Perspectives, Solutions**

I. INTRODUCTION

Ageism is the term for prejudice or discrimination against someone based on their age. Although the phrase was first used to refer to bias against the elderly, it is now also used to refer to discrimination against children, adults, or teenagers based only on their age. Ageism occurs in many contexts, but it is most prevalent in the medical field and the workplace. Ageism manifests as disapproving remarks about an individual's age, exclusion from social circles, forced retirement, disregarding your opinions because of your age, and lacking opportunities to gain new skills. This study addresses the knowledge gap by investigating how Gen Z perceives, experiences, and understands ageism. Through a mixed-methods approach, this research explores Gen Z's attitudes towards older generations, their experiences of age-based discrimination, and their ideas for promoting intergenerational understanding and combating ageism. Ageism is a widespread problem that impacts people of all ages. However, in conversations about ageism, the viewpoints and experiences of younger generations—especially Gen Z or those born between 1997 and 2012—are frequently disregarded. The nuances of this issue require an awareness of Gen Z's perspectives on ageism since they represent the most technologically adept and varied generation in history. To better comprehend Gen Z's perceptions and experiences with ageism, this study will examine their ideas for fostering intergenerational understanding and battling ageism, their views toward older generations and their experiences with discrimination based on age. This study looks at ageism from the perspective of Generation Z to better understand this complicated problem and provide ideas for tactics that will encourage more. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of ageism's complexities and has implications for developing effective initiatives to combat ageism and promote a more inclusive society for all ages.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature provides a comprehensive overview of existing studies, theories, and discussions surrounding the concept of ageism, with a specific focus on its impact on Generation Z. It explores the multifaceted dimensions of age-based discrimination, emphasizing how generational bias and stereotypes shape societal perceptions and interactions. By examining diverse perspectives, this section aims to contextualize the experiences and challenges faced by Gen Z while also identifying gaps in existing research. This foundation serves to inform potential strategies and solutions for addressing ageism as perceived by this dynamic and digitally-native generation.

According to Gendron et al. (2024), generational bias, as a subset of ageism, encompasses discrimination against both younger and older individuals based on generational cohorts, often serving as a proxy for age-based discrimination. Their cross-sectional study involving 913 participants found that Millennials and Gen Z reported the highest levels of generational discrimination, characterized by perceptions of being less capable, more opinionated, and more selfish than older cohorts. These younger groups also exhibited greater levels of internalized and relational ageing anxiety. The study underscores the need to address generational bias to deepen the understanding of ageism and mitigate its broader societal implications.

According to Sudarmanto and bin Ismail (2023), e-commerce advertising designs in Indonesia, particularly on platforms like YouTube, reflect ageism and exploit Gen-Z as a primary commodity in digital marketing. By using a qualitative approach, including textual analysis and audience studies, their study analyzed the visual and textual elements of advertisements, specifically from Shopee Indonesia, and examined their reliance on Gen-Z social imagery and aesthetic idioms such as hyperreality, intertextuality, and pastiche. The findings highlighted a paradox where the visual exploitation of Gen-Z is normalized and even positively received by audiences, raising critical concerns about the interplay of ageism and representation in digital advertising.

According to Nadler, Morr, and Naumann (2017), traditional perspectives on ageism in the workplace have predominantly centered on individuals over the age of 40, as reflected in the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967, which provides legal protection for this demographic in the United States. Much of the research has focused on issues such as safeguarding older workers, intentional and unintentional discrimination, impacts on employee attitudes, and links between age-based discrimination and retirement intentions. However, the authors emphasize that ageism is not exclusive to older workers, highlighting a gap in recognizing age-based biases experienced by younger workers, such as Millennials, within existing legislation and workplace practices.

According to Mayo et al. (2022), ageism can significantly impact personal and public health, as emphasized by the World Health Organization's global campaign against ageism launched in 2016. Their qualitative focus group study analyzed perceptions of ageism among Baby Boomers (ages 60–72) and members of the Silent Generation (ages 78–85), highlighting generational differences in understanding its effects. While participants initially minimized the personal impacts of ageism, they later acknowledged its economic, social, and health consequences, often perceiving these effects as greater for others rather than themselves. Ageist behaviors were identified in employment, healthcare, family networks, and communal settings. The study underscores the challenges of tailoring public health campaigns to engage specific groups and calls for further research and training initiatives to mitigate the harmful impacts of ageism across generations.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research means the systematic investigation and study of sources, materials, and things to establish facts or draw conclusions. Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of methods applied to a field of study.

A. Problem Formulation
Ageism is a widespread and intricate problem that impacts people of all ages, although its effects and expressions might differ throughout generations. This research aims to solve the following problem formulation. This formulation guides the study's investigation of ageism through the perspective of Generation Z, which also looks at their perspectives, experiences, and suggested remedies to the issue. Ultimately, this information informs tactics to lessen ageism's effects and promote an inclusive society.

B. Scope of the Study
This study encompasses a comprehensive exploration of ageism from the perspectives of Generation Z (Gen Z), including their attitudes, beliefs, and personal experiences of ageism. It delves into the factors contributing to ageism, such as social media, education, family values, and socioeconomic factors. The study also identifies effective solutions to

address ageism, including education and awareness programs, policy changes, intergenerational initiatives, and technological innovations.

C. Aim of the Study

This research aims to investigate and understand ageism from the different perspectives of Generation Z (Gen Z), determining their attitudes, experiences, and views of ageism and their suggested remedies for the problem. The study seeks to give an in-depth understanding of ageism from the perspective of Generation Z, ultimately assisting in creating creative responses to combat ageism and advancing an inclusive and age-friendly society.

D. Objectives of the Study

1. To find the demographic profile of the respondents.
2. To Understand Gen Z's Perceptions and Experiences of Ageism
3. To analyse the differences in ageism perceptions and experiences among various subgroups within Gen Z
4. To Assess the Role of Media in Shaping Attitudes Towards Ageism
5. To Examine Workplace Dynamics and Ageism
6. To Evaluate the Effectiveness of Educational Interventions

E. Research Design

The online survey research design was used in this study. This study's universe consists of individuals born between 1997 and 2012, commonly referred to as Generation Z (Gen Z). The sample size adopted was 80 based on random sampling technique. Data was collected and analysed using online platform.

F. Study Results

Among the total 75 respondents, 53.3 % are male, and 46.7% are female. According to the findings, a marginally more significant proportion of males were among the individuals who participated in the survey. The survey results indicate that out of the 75 respondents, 53.3% were male, and 46.7% were female. This suggests that the gender distribution was relatively balanced, with a slightly higher number of Perception on 'Ageism is discrimination'

males participating in the survey. Although the difference is marginal, it highlights a slight male majority in the respondent group. However, the close percentages between the two genders indicate a reasonably representative mix of male and female perspectives in the survey.

Out of 75 respondents, 54.7% hailed from the rural area, about 28% from the urban area, 9.3% from the semi-urban area, and about 8% from the semi-rural area. The survey results reveal a significant distribution of respondents across various living areas, most hailing from rural regions. Out of 75 respondents, 54.7% (approximately 41 individuals) come from rural areas, highlighting a solid rural representation. Urban areas account for 28% of respondents (around 21 individuals), indicating a substantial, though smaller, urban presence. Meanwhile, semi-urban residents make up 9.3% of the total (around seven individuals), and semi-rural areas contribute 8% (roughly six individuals). These results suggest that most respondents have rural backgrounds, which could imply that insights derived from the survey are more reflective of rural perspectives. However, with notable representation from urban, semi-urban, and semi-rural areas, the survey also captures various living experiences, providing a balanced view across different environments.
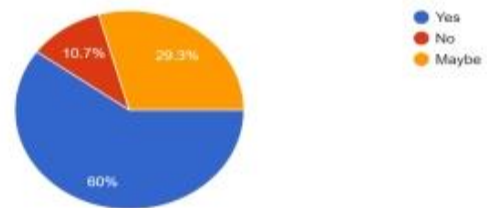
Out of 75 respondents, 78.7% are students, 10.7% have full-time jobs, 5.3% have part-time jobs, and 5.3% are self-employed. The survey results reveal that the majority of respondents, 78.7%, are students, indicating that the sample predominantly comprises individuals engaged in academic pursuits. This suggests that the respondents may have unique perspectives shaped by their educational environment, possibly focused on learning and personal development. Additionally, 10.7% of respondents are employed full-time, reflecting a smaller segment of individuals who have established professional careers. This group may have different priorities or time constraints compared to students. Meanwhile, 5.3% of the respondents are part-time workers, highlighting a segment balancing work and possibly other commitments, such as studies.
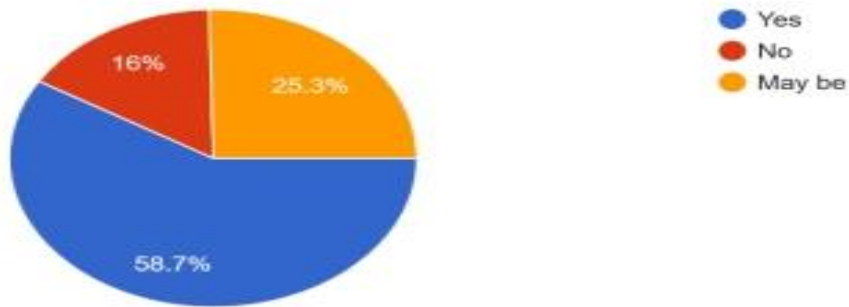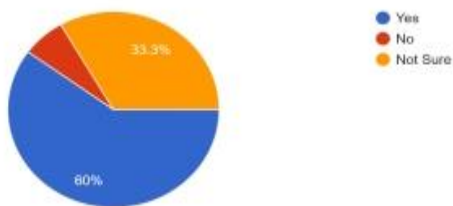
Out of 75 respondents, 58.7% say that ageism is discrimination, 25.3% say it is not, and 16% say they are unsure. The survey results reveal that a significant majority of respondents, 58.7%, perceive ageism as discrimination. This indicates a broad recognition of the issue and suggests that most people believe that mistreating individuals due to their age is unjust. On the other hand, 25.3% of respondents do not view ageism as discrimination, implying that a notable portion of the population either lacks awareness of the issue or disagrees with the notion that age-based biases are harmful. Additionally, 16% of respondents need clarification, highlighting some uncertainty or ambivalence regarding ageism. Overall, the results suggest that while most respondents acknowledge ageism as a discriminatory practice, there remains a substantial portion of people who either dismiss it or are uncertain about its impact. This points to the potential need for further awareness and education.

G. Ageism as a bane to the society

Out of 75 respondents, 60% said that ageism is a problem, 33.3% said that it is not a problem in society, and 6.7% were not sure. The survey results reveal a significant concern about ageism in society. Out of 75 respondents, 60% (45 people) believe that ageism is indeed a problem, highlighting that the majority recognise age-based discrimination as an issue. In contrast, 33.3% (25 respondents) do not view ageism as a societal problem, suggesting that a

substantial portion of people either haven't experienced or are unaware of the challenges related to age discrimination. Finally, 6.7% (5 respondents) are still determining, indicating a small group who may need more awareness or information to form an opinion on the matter. Overall, the results suggest that while a majority perceive ageism as a real issue, a notable minority either disagrees or is unsure, pointing to a potential need for more education and awareness on the topic.

H. Impact of social media

60% of Respondents say that social media impacts ageism, 29.3% say that it does not, and 10.7 % are unsure. The survey results reveal a significant perception that social media influences ageism. A majority, 60% of respondents, believe that social media has a noticeable impact on ageism, indicating that platforms may contribute to or perpetuate age-related stereotypes or biases. This could stem from how age-related content is shared, portrayed, or commented on across various social media platforms. On the other hand, 29.3% of respondents feel that social media does not impact ageism, suggesting that they either don't observe ageist behaviour or believe that social media remains neutral in shaping views on age. This could point to differing experiences depending on the types of platforms or communities they engage with. Finally, 10.7% of respondents need

clarification about the relationship between social media and ageism. This uncertainty may indicate a need for more awareness or mixed experiences when identifying ageism in online environments. Overall, I. Effective Strategies in combating negative impact of ageism

the results suggest that while most respondents recognise an impact, a notable portion remain either unconvinced or unclear about the role of social media in ageism.
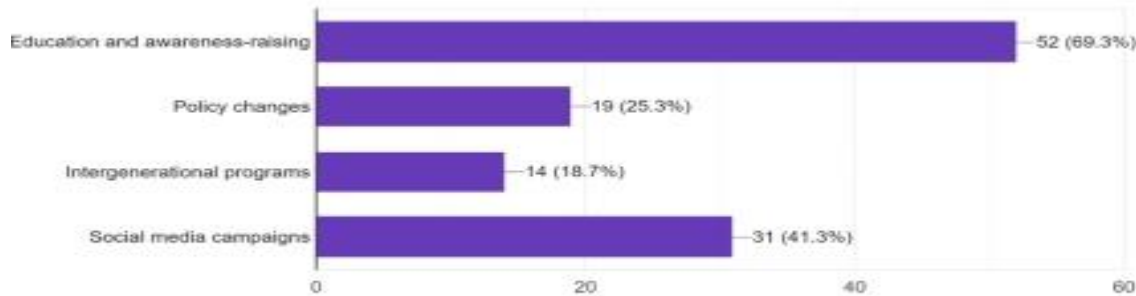
When asked about strategies, 69.3% of respondents suggested education and awareness raising, 41.3% suggested social media campaigns, 25.3% suggested policy change, and 18.7% suggested intergenerational programmes. The survey results reveal that the most popular strategy for combating ageism is education and awareness raising, with 69.3% of respondents supporting this approach. This suggests that many believe increasing public knowledge about ageism is crucial for reducing negative stereotypes and fostering tremendous respect for older adults. 41.3% of respondents suggested using social media campaigns, indicating that they view platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as practical tools for spreading awareness, challenging misconceptions, Promoting age diversity and inclusion in our communities

and promoting positive narratives about ageing. Additionally, 25.3% recommended policy changes to address ageism, reflecting a desire for structural and legislative reforms that protect older adults from discrimination in areas like employment, healthcare, and housing. Lastly, 18.7% highlighted the importance of intergenerational programs, which aim to foster understanding and collaboration between different age groups, help bridge the gap between generations, and reduce age-based prejudice. The data shows that a combination of education, social media, policy reform, and intergenerational engagement is the key to effectively combating ageism.

When asked about promoting age diversity and inclusion in communities, 46.7% of respondents replied that they did so by organising intergenerational events, 30.7% responded that they did so by supporting age-diverse initiatives, 21.3%

said that they did so by promoting age-inclusive language, and 1.3% said that they were not sure. The survey results offer valuable insight into how people promote age diversity and inclusion within their communities. A significant 46.7% of respondents

indicated that they actively organise intergenerational events, highlighting the importance of bringing different age groups together for mutual understanding and collaboration. This suggests a strong recognition of the value of these interactions in bridging generational gaps and fostering a sense of community. Another 30.7% of respondents focus on supporting age-diverse initiatives, emphasising the importance of backing programs and efforts that address and promote age diversity. This could include various activities, from advocacy to volunteering with organisations that serve a wide age demographic. Interestingly, 21.3% said they promote age-inclusive language, pointing to thoughtful communication's role in creating an environment where individuals of all ages feel respected and valued. Language that avoids stereotypes or marginalisation is vital to fostering inclusivity. Lastly, 1.3% of respondents needed clarification about how they promote age diversity and inclusion. This indicates that further education and awareness on how individuals can actively participate in fostering age diversity and inclusiveness in their communities might be needed. The results suggest a positive commitment to creating more inclusive communities across age groups.

I. Major Findings

Gen Z's Perspective on Ageism, Intergenerational Collaboration, Inclusive Representation, Age-Friendly Policies, and Empathy

1 Ageism's Impact on Progress, Innovation, and Growth:

- Gen Z believes ageism limits individual and societal potential by excluding diverse perspectives and experiences.
- Ageism restricts access to talent and skills, perpetuates outdated practices, and discourages new ideas.
- It reduces adaptability, creates a hostile work environment, and limits access to opportunities like education, training, and career advancement.

2. Intergenerational Collaboration:

- Gen Z values intergenerational collaboration, acknowledging diverse age groups' unique perspectives, talents, and experiences.

- Ageism can lead to insufficient training or development opportunities, creating stereotypes that misrepresent people's talents and abilities.
- Recognising and challenging these biases is critical for creating an inclusive atmosphere.

3. Inclusive Representation:

- Gen Z values inclusive representation in media, education, and leadership roles.
- It fosters a fair and equal atmosphere, dismantles age-related preconceptions, and motivates people to achieve their goals.
- It broadens ideas, promotes engagement and motivation, and aids in the attraction and retention of top personnel.
- It promotes a cultural transformation, resulting in a society that embraces and celebrates age variety.

4. Age-Friendly Policies:

- Gen Z advocates for age-friendly policies that encourage diversity, age, flexibility, and accessibility.
- Age-friendly policies address different age groups' demands and challenges, encouraging intergenerational collaboration and information exchange.
- Implementing age-friendly policies allows firms to tap into their workforce's potential, promote an inclusive culture, and drive financial success.

5. Empathy and Understanding:

- Empathy and understanding are practical tools for bridging the age gap and promoting a deeper connection and appreciation among people of different ages.

6. Intergenerational Mentorship Programmes:

- Pair older mentors with younger mentees to foster mutual learning.
- Promote cross-generational understanding, break down stereotypes, and enhance communication.
- It can be implemented in workplaces, educational institutions, or community organisations.
- Focus on specific areas like career development, skill-building, or leadership growth.

7. Active Listening Sessions:

- Structured talks where people of various ages share their experiences, opinions, and concerns.

- Teach sympathetic listening, leading to a better understanding of different age groups' challenges, values, and motivations.
- It can be held in various contexts, including workplaces, community centres, and educational institutions.
- Help bridge the age gap by providing a secure setting for open communication and promoting an inclusive culture.

8. Age-diverse Team Projects:
- Involve teams of people from various age groups to collaborate on a single project or job.
- Break down age preconceptions, foster cross-generational understanding, and improve communication.
- Serve as a model for inclusive cooperation, improving the work environment and fostering an age-inclusive culture.

9. Empathy-Building Workshops:
- Participatory activities aim to develop understanding and compassion among people of different ages.
- Use tactics like role-playing, storytelling, and group discussions.
- Dispel age-related prejudices and biases, establishing a culture of inclusion and respect.

10. Age-awareness Training:
- A programme that teaches people about the effects of age-related biases and stereotypes on personal and professional relationships.
- Delves into the complexities of age variety through interactive seminars, case studies, and group discussions.

IV. CONCLUSION

Ageism is a widespread problem that affects people of all ages, but Gen Z is particularly positioned to challenge and deconstruct ageist attitudes and stereotypes. We may work toward a more inclusive and equitable society by acknowledging the importance of intergenerational collaboration and information sharing. It is time for Gen Z to take the lead in promoting age diversity and combatting ageism, establishing a culture of mutual respect, and recognising that ageism is a remnant of the past that must be eradicated for individuals and society to reach their full potential. We, Gen Z, regard ageism as a severe impediment to advancement, innovation, and growth, and we are determined to challenge it. To achieve a more inclusive and fairer world, we must cultivate intergenerational collaboration, where wisdom and experience meet, and creativity and innovation flourish. We must promote inclusive representation in media, education, and leadership roles, highlighting varied age perspectives. Empathy and compassion, as well as age-friendly regulations, can help to close the age difference. We can create a society that recognises and celebrates age variety by adopting an age-insensitive mindset and focusing on talents and potential rather than age or generation labels. With collaborative action, Gen Z can lead the charge towards a better future where everyone prospers, regardless of age.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] De Paula Couto, M. C., & Rothermund, K. (2019). Ageism and age discrimination at the workplace—A psychological perspective. In *Vorurteile im Arbeitsleben: Unconscious bias erkennen, vermeiden und abbauen* (pp. 57-80).

[2] Denaro, L., Giorgi, G., Sderci, F., & Fiz-Perez, J. (2018). Age power: Work engagement in different generations. *Calitatea, 19*(166), 145-150.

[3] Gendron, T., Marrs, S., Inker, J., & Palmarini, N. (2024). Generational bias: Another form of ageism. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 98*(3), 284-299.

[4] Gendron, T., Marrs, S., Inker, J., & Palmarini, N. (2024). Generational Bias: Another Form of Ageism. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, *98*(3), 284-299. https://doi.org/10.1177/00914150231194244

[5] Gothing, A. L. (2018). *Ageism, passed down from generation to generation.*

[6] La Rocca, S. (2021). *The importance of being oldest: Ageism and memory in the ageing society.*

[7] Mayo, D. M., Meuser, T. M., Robnett, R. H., Webster, M. E., & Woolard, C. E. (2022). Cross-generational understandings of ageism and its perceived impacts on personal-public health. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, *65*(7),

711-727.
https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2021.2019865

[8] Nadler, J. T., Morr, R., & Naumann, S. (2017). Millennials, media, and research: Ageism and the younger worker. *The Palgrave handbook of age diversity and work*, 423-446. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-46781-2_17

[9] Sudarmanto, J. A., & bin Ismail, A. I. (2023, April). Representation of Ageism and Gen-Z Exploitation Issues in E-commerce Advertising Design in Indonesia. In *International Seminar on Language, Education, and Culture (ISoLEC 2022)* (pp. 190-201). Atlantis Press. 10.2991/978-2-38476-038-1_21

[10] Dickinson, R., Vahia, I., Singh, A., Gupta, S., Alkhatib, F., Handa, I., & Sekhon, H. (2024). Exploring Digital Ageism: A Systematic Literature Review on Social Media and Aging. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, *32*(4), S130-S131.

[11] Silva, T. A., Oliveira, C. M., & Martins, E. (2024). Generations and Work Motivation-Ageism and The Practices of Human Resource Management. *Procedia Computer Science*, *237*, 61-71.