

## **Determining the Perception and Attitude of Youth in Misamis University Towards the Elderly People**

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### **Abstract**

There are many different stereotypical views of youth towards elderly people. Hence, this study was an attempt to determine the perception and attitude of youth towards the elderly people. The descriptive research design and the survey method with the use of a questionnaire were adopted. The respondents were 100 youth individuals in Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines. Overall findings revealed that the youth have positive perception and attitude towards the elderly. However, looking into the individual attitude of the youth, it appeared that they have negative attitudes towards the old people that cannot be ignored. The findings of this study may provide insights how the youth view and interact the old people as possible input for strengthening the value formation of the Filipino youth.

**Keywords:** Filipino, interaction, old, value, view

## **Introduction**

Aging occurs in a societal context, ranging from the microscale of the family to the macroscale of the society (Sijuwade, 2009). The ageing process is a biological reality that has its own dynamic, largely beyond human control. The age of 60 or 65 years is said to be the beginning of old age which is approximately equal to retirement ages in most developing nations (Giri et al., 2016). In the Philippines, senior citizens or those aged 60 years old and over. In 2010, the senior citizens comprised 6.8 percent (6.3 million) of the household population which is higher than the 6.0 percent recorded in 2000. Females were recorded at 3.5 million (55.8%) while males at 2.5 million (44.2%) (Philippine Commission on Women, 2014).

There are many different stereotypical views of youth towards elderly people (Cuddy et al., 2005). Perceptions of the youth towards the old people depend on which stereotype, positive or negative is salient. Schmidt and Boland (1986) identified four stereotype subclusters under which elderly people are categorized: impaired or vulnerable, healthy or active, miserable or waiting to die, and continuing to enjoy life. Most young people assume knowledge of the competencies, beliefs, and abilities of the elderly across different areas (Cuddy & Fiske, 2002). When these assumptions are based on one of the negative stereotypes about elderly people, ageism can result (Greenberg et al., 2002). Ageism refers to the negative attitudes and behavior toward older people and has gained attention for the past years (Nelson, 2016). Ageism may be the most commonly experienced form of discrimination (Ray et al., 2006).

Aging in the Philippines remains a subject that is severely under-theorized in research (Villegas, 2014). The view and interaction of the youth towards the old people are not well-studied. Hence, this study was an attempt to determine the perception and attitude of youth towards the elderly people. The findings of this study may provide insights how the youth view and interact the old people as possible input for strengthening the value formation of the Filipino youth.

## Materials and Methods

The descriptive research was utilized in this study. The survey method with the use of a questionnaire was adopted. The questionnaire was tested to 20 target youth respondents to ensure its validity. The respondents were 100 youth individuals (50 male, 50 female) randomly selected from Misamis University in Ozamiz City. The questionnaire has three parts. Part I consists of items that gather the profile of the respondents. Part II consists of 14 items that describe the positive and negative perceptions of the youth towards the elderly people. The respondents were given options for their answers using the four-point Likert scale with the means of their responses interpreted as follows:

<b>Likert scale</b>		<b>Continuum</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
4	Strongly agree	3.26–4.0	Very positive
3	Agree	2.51–3.25	Positive
2	Disagree	1.76–2.50	Negative
1	Strongly disagree	1.0–1.75	Very negative

Part III of the questionnaire consists of 11 statements that describe the youth attitude towards the elderly people. The respondents were given options for their answers using the four-point Likert scale with the means of their responses interpreted as follows:

<b>Likert scale</b>		<b>Continuum</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
4	Very often	3.26–4.0	Very positive
3	Often	2.51–3.25	Positive
2	Seldom	1.76–2.50	Negative
1	Not at all	1.0–1.75	Very negative

Informed consent was obtained from the target respondents before the conduct of the study. The target group was assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the anonymity of their identity. The scope of the study was explained to them and their right to refuse participation. All target respondents gave their consent to participate in the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

Table 1 shows the profile of the youth respondents. Majority of the youth respondents were within the 15-20 years old age bracket. The number of male respondents was the same with the female. Youth is the critical period in a person's growth and development from the onset of adolescence towards adulthood comprising the considerable sector of the population from the age of 15 to 30 years old. The respondents lived with one or two elderly parents or grandparents. Living arrangement of families can serve as an indicator of support available to the elderly (Domingo & Asis, 1995). The marital status of older people determines the impacts to their living arrangement, support system, and well-being (Concepcion & Perez, 2006). Mostly, old parents live with their children who play an important role in providing assistance to them. In this study, majority of the respondents had no other elderly person living in their household but others have one or two. Filipinos are generally known to take care of their elderly family members and not leave them to the care of an institution or other people (Montebon, 2014). As shown also in this study, most respondents are not members of an organization or group concerned with the welfare of elderly people.

The perception of youth towards the elderly people is shown in Table 2. The respondents have positive perception towards the elderly people. They perceive them as cheerful, easy to get along, and have good humor. The elderly people also seldom complain about the young people. As people age, they tend to become happier and more satisfied with their lives (Gregoire, 2015). The youth feel happy when the elderly people tell stories about their past. Older people love to tell their life stories because they find peace in looking back (Garland, 2016). The youth perceive that elderly have more power in the society which is similar to the finding of Yen et al. (2009). Older people have made and will continue to make a tremendous contribution to the society (Altmann, 2014). Elderly are also perceived by the youth as wiser and prefer to work as long as they can. Cognitive templates develop in the older brain based on pattern recognition can form the basis for wise behavior and decisions (Korkki, 2014).

**Table 1. Profile of respondents.**

Profile	Categories	Percentage
Age	15-20	65
	21-25	16
	26-30	19
Gender	Male	50
	Female	50
No. of elderly parents or grandparent in the household	One	36
	Two	32
	Three	10
	Four	5
	None	17
No. of other elderly people in the household	One	30
	Two	14
	Three	5
	None	51
Member of any group concerned with the welfare of elderly people	Yes	17
	No	83

**Table 2. Perception of youth towards the elderly people.**

Description for elderly	Mean	Response	Remarks
Cheerful, agreeable, and good-humored	2.81	Agree	Positive
Seldom complain about the young	2.93	Agree	Positive
Make the youth feel happy when they tell stories of their past	3.13	Agree	Positive
Have more power in society	2.72	Agree	Positive
Wiser	2.97	Agree	Positive
Prefer to work as long as they can	3.02	Agree	Positive
Understand the youth	1.77	Disagree	Negative
Not jealous of the youth	2.48	Disagree	Negative
Not Demanding	2.50	Disagree	Negative
Interested in the youth	2.46	Disagree	Negative
Do not bore others with their stories	2.49	Disagree	Negative
No irritating faults	2.50	Disagree	Negative
Never change their mind	2.44	Disagree	Negative
Overall mean	2.63		Positive

Old people on the other hand received from the youth negative perceptions. The youth think of the elderly as people who do not understand them, jealous in them, demanding, and uninterested in them. Older people may not understand young people for couple of reasons but this notion does not hold true all the time. The old people may not understand the self-confidence displayed by the youth as quickly renamed at present time as “narcissism” or “arrogance” (Cole, 2016). However, young people are more likely to feel jealous than any other age groups (Mortimer, 2015). Furthermore, withdrawal from professional life and limited social roles has a significant negative impact on the emotions and personality of the elderly that make them uninterested in the youth (Grzanka-Tykwińska & Kędziora-Kornatowska, 2010). Nevertheless, the findings of Cybulski et al. (2013) showed that majority of the elderly people agreed that contact with young people allows them to learn new skills, such as computer skills and use of the Internet.

This study also showed that the youth are bored of the old people’s stories and irritated of their faults. Older people really do tell longer, more boring stories (Corderoy, 2011). Older adults were less able to tell coherent stories and more likely to contradict themselves as they lack the ability to tell stories efficiently and clearly compared to other age groups. Also, the younger generation may not get along with difficult aging people (Rosenblatt, 2011) notably with everyday memory errors in the elderly people. Tip-of-the-tongue errors were the most commonly reported memory errors in old people (Ossher et al., 2013). Another negative perception of the youth to the elderly is their being unable to change their mind. As people age, they gather the life experience and this invokes a sense of authority in their minds for the youth who are younger than them.

Table 3 shows the attitudes of youth towards the elderly. Their attitudes were very positive with regard to extending their respect to the beliefs of the older people about life and humanity. The beliefs of old people about the world in general and beliefs about the goodness of people also received positive appraisal by the youth (Poulin & Silver, 2008). The kiss and the ‘mano’ are honoring-gestures of the Filipino

youth for the old people as a sign of respect and a way of asking a blessing from the elder (Tampos-Cabazares & Cabazares, 2016). The youth also showed very positive attitude as they enjoy listening to the advice of old people. Parents and other adults are credible sources of advice (Go, 2014). The overall perception of the youth towards the elderly people in this study was positive.

**Table 3. Youth’s attitude towards the elderly people.**

	Mean	Response	Interpretation
I respect their beliefs and thoughts about life and humanity.	3.62	All the time	Very positive
When I come home and/or see my elder relative(s), I always greet them with a kiss or do the “Mano po” as a sign of respect.	3.51	All the time	Very positive
I enjoy listening to their advices.	3.44	All the time	Very positive
I enjoy watching movies or television shows with them.	2.91	Often	Positive
I enjoy imparting my ideas about basic technology to them like computers, cell phones, etc.	2.81	Often	Positive
I enjoy going out with them, like eating at restaurants or going to parks.	2.89	Often	Positive
I used to go to church with my elder parents/grandparents	3.02	Often	Positive
I used to accompany elder persons whenever I see them about to cross the street	3.05	Often	Positive
I used to offer my seat to elders especially when riding in jeepney, bus or motor cabs.	3.22	Often	Positive
I obey them especially when they ask me to go for errands	3.21	Often	Positive
I enjoy sharing my personal life and experiences to my elder relatives	3.0	Often	Positive
Overall mean	3.15		Positive

The positive attitude of the youth is also exemplified to the elderly by being with them watching television, imparting information technology, going to restaurants, parks, church, and when crossing the road. Television is an important window to the world and a basis for shared experience for seniors (Reid, 2016). Hence, spending time with them may help them stay involved with the society. Encouraging and teaching older people to become computer-literate can also make them engaged with the modern age (Kazimi, 2014). Cafes and restaurants have become popular gathering spots for elderly as well (Gonchar, 2014) and being with them out of doors may improve the quality of their life (Atkins et al., 2013). Also, older people can experience improved physical and mental health by spending time walking with them in the parks (Brown, 2007). Church promotes healthy habits for the old people but one of the biggest obstacles that keep seniors from regularly attending church is the limitation of their mobility and personal autonomy. Being with the elderly in going to church is indeed a great help and can build meaningful and rewarding relationships between the youth and the elderly (Hutchinson, 2013).

On another context, elderly people are overrepresented among pedestrian fatalities from motor or car accidents because of their impaired or limited mobility (Zivotofsky et al., 2012). Thus, the company of the youth for elderly people in crossing the road is helpful. Aside from the help of the youth to the old people, the knowledge and experience that the youth can learn from older people while spending time with them are valuable life lessons (Shuda, 2016). Also, emotional bonds with family and friends have a positive impact on health and psychological well-being of older people (Sumic et al., 2007). Another positive attitude of the youth to elderly people found out in this study is offering seat when riding jeepney, bus or motor cabs. In the study of Ingersoll-Dayton and Saengtienchai (1999), changes in the respect for the elderly in Asia varied and were attributed to variations in family structure and function, education, income, and modernization. Thus, it has been observed in Ozamiz City that some younger passengers in bus offer seat to the old people but other just look on. In the same manner that even if Filipino children are trained to obey their parents, older

siblings, and elders (Saito et al., 2010; Alampay, 2014), but there are those who show disobedience to the elderly people (Tucker, 2016).

As shown also in this study, the youth showed positive attitude by sharing their personal life to their elder relatives. Both young and old bottled up painful memories and emotions, but talking about it may help (BBC News, 2011). The elderly show more passive actions for complex interpersonal tensions such as doing nothing or letting the situation pass. Older people also offer their time and other resources that the youth need (Parker, 2016). As people get older, they become more interested and capable of listening better (Zenger, 2015). Overall result of this study showed that the attitude of the youth towards the elderly people is positive.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Overall, the youth have positive perception and attitude towards the elderly people. However, looking into the individual attitude of the youth, it appeared they have negative attitudes towards the old people that cannot be ignored. Value education has to be strengthened in academic institutions to improve the perception and attitude of the youth to old people from positive to very positive.

## **Acknowledgment**

The authors would like to thank the Misamis University for the support.

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