Aging Populations and Theories

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**Introduction**

Ageism is defined as a stance of growing old. Ageism refers to people who are at the age of 60 to 100 years or more. Advancement in sociological grounds has highlighted different perspectives associated with aging such as, what methodologies can be opted to study the body processes of old people, what happens when somebody grows old and what is the association between aging and societal relationships. In accordance with social gerontology, it's been sixty years that a separate discipline has been formulated in order to understand aging in accordance with the perspective of social science. (Goldsmith, et, al. 2015). The globalization of International Migration has highlighted that there is a massive increase in the ethnic diversity of aging population. It is assumed that the adults hold negative views regarding old age expectancies, adhering to social perception and observation that asserts, the existence of aged people in society is a victim to role conflicts. Research has revealed that about 80% of people believe they are insulted and, mistreated because of their age and inability to represent themselves. In accordance with the gerontological research and its aspects of policy and practice, social gerontologist has formulated several theories that can elaborate on how people respond and react to the aging process. *Aging is a paradigm that represents challenges to various programs and policymakers, taking into account the conceptions that infer "aged people" as discounted.*

**Discussion**

Unlike other prejudices of society, ageism is not usually studied, and it is rarely confronted. The consequences of ageism refer to the analysis of the fact that caters to the phenomenon of discounted with increasing age. It is significant to note that age structure of the United States has been changed over time because of certain factors such as race, sex, and age. According to a report formulated by the National Projections, it has been bought into insight that there are several theories that are formulated to explain perspective of people towards aging and methodologies that can explain the paradigm of social gerontology. (Carmen María Sarabia Cobo, 2019). The myths and prejudices associated with aging can be found by adhering to seven theories termed as, age stratification, social constructionists, life course, political economy of aging, social exchange and critical theory. Although there is no single proposition serving as the baseline of theory, still these theories are a tool to address the factors involved in aging.

**Theories of Aging**

Activity theory is one of the most accepted theoretical perspective that infers that social activity is the core essence for people of all ages. It has been asserted that active people are more adjusted and stratified as compared to the unengaged people. In a simplified form, this theory associates personal engagement with activity, inferring the more active people will be socially, mentally and physically strong. The theoretical framework has highlighted that old people are having a “roleless role" in the society taking into account that reduced approach towards life has made them sterile section of society. (Carmen María Sarabia Cobo, 2019). Activity theory has also incorporated gender differences that are associated with the types of activities such as working alone is a measure of self-esteem for men but not for women, inferring "might" is the precursor to enable people to confirm their existence by participating in the roles of high identity.

Disengagement theory is an explicit theory that elaborate gerontological context by contending it to be both inevitable and normal for people to engage themselves in passive roles with increasing age. The theory infers a continuous withdrawal of aging people from society, because aging is a tool of optimal functioning. It is significant to note that the theory emerged from the context of social thought, considering a number of variables such as cultural factors, gender, and socioeconomic paradigms. (Reed & R, 2015). Disengagement theory highlights several paradigms such as the role of society in mitigating the opportunities for employment. The role of an individual in loosening of social ties and secondary responses. Social constructionist is a theory that highlights social behavior within the structures of society. The theory asserts that aging is influenced by the interference of social structure and societal bonds. However, social exchange theory determines that there is a continuous shift of skills, resources, and roles with respect to age, demonstrating that aged people are more deprived. Life course perspective highlights that aging is a dynamic process that infers a shift in the cohorts, groups, and individuals. It would not be wrong to say that this theory proceeds on the basis of age-related transitions. (Carmen María Sarabia Cobo, 2019).

Feminist theory is another theory that has highlighted that gender is one of the major tools in understanding the stance of age-related roles. It would not be wrong to say that feminist theory infers gender as one of the prime factors in determining the phenomena of distribution of roles. Critical theory is another aging theory that infers that there is a humanistic dimension associated with aging, considering the understanding of interpretive and subjective dimensions associated with aging that can act as a basic tool to address the prejudice. (Goldsmith, et, al. 2015). Critical theory is a tool that addresses the structural components of aging by highlighting the distribution of activities and roles.

The political economy theory of aging is another paradigm of social gerontology, addressing how the interaction between political and economic factors have determined the distribution of social resources that are distributed within a society. It would not be wrong to say that the variation in the status of elderly people and the treatment of the elderly people reflect the economic trends of society. According to the continuity theory, elder people do not change their lifestyle and behavior in accordance with their age, in fact aging people make certain choices that can maintain the attribute of consistency in the personality structure and beliefs of people as well as the external structures. (Reed & R, 2015).

Gerotranscendence or symbolic interactionism theory has highlighted that with the passage of time, people become less self-centered and they feel more comfortable by connecting to the natural world. In accordance with modernization theory, it can be asserted that there is a direct relationship between the primary cause of the condensing role of elder people and the influence of society. With the passage of time, an individual feels more deprives and excluded from society. Societies become more towards the individualistic notions and normative view of life because major section of attention, time and energy is spent on looking after the near circle. (Carmen María Sarabia Cobo, 2019).

**Age stratification theory**

Age stratification highlights the sociological concept that is associated with the study of aging and population, it demonstrates and studies the relationship that exists between old people and different age groups, considering different state and age groups. The theory highlights that the members of society are stratified by gender, age, and class. The value of a person in terms of social status is demonstrated by the ascribed roles. It would not be wrong to say that age stratification can be defined as a system that highlights the inequalities linked to age. In a simplified form, strategic theory is the hierarchical ranking of people in different age groups within a society. (Goldsmith, et, al. 2015). Age serves as a basic tool to determine social control, with an increased age there is varied access to social resources such as economic and political resources. The roots of theory can be found on ascribed status, considering it as a major source of inequality leading to ageism. It affects different paradigms of life such as social norms, family structure, and the trends of a workplace. It infers that age is one of the components that can contribute to the shifting of social status, leading to ageism. There is a profound variation in the operational spectrum of society with age referring to the distribution of resources, an implication of policies and laws as well as the behavioral expectations. (Reed & R, 2015).

**Myths associated with aging**

There are several myths that are associated with aging. It is significant to note that these myths are perpetuated side by side because these myths are a common observations

**Aging is depressing**

Many of the studies have revealed that aging is depressing because aging cause social isolation by creating distances. There is an increased stance of deprivation because a loss of variables refers to the mitigation of resourcefulness, leading to emotional breakdown. Moreover, the discriminating notion of aging has made old people realize that old age is depressing and devastating effecting both psychological and physical health. Lack of care from caregivers have supported to perpetuate the prevalence of this myth. (Reed & R, 2015).

**Age makes you unproductive**

It is evident that there are a lot of people who are deprived of the social responsibility due to the inability to cater to social requirements. As soon as people retire and leave the workplace, they are brought into a lifestyle where countless hours are spent staying idle and watching others doing something. Nothing to do imparts feeling of disability that not only hampers the emotions of a person in fact it makes them physically weak. Gender inequalities and lack of involvement of care givers have perpetuated the validity of myth. (Reed & R, 2015).

**Conclusion**

Aging is a natural phenomenon that is associated to people who are 60 years old or are older. There are certain paradigms and theoretical framework associated with aging, taking into account the fact that aging people have associated certain prejudices and myths with their identities. There are several theories that highlight varied spectra of aging, such as activist theory, feminist theory, critical theory and disengagement theory. It is interesting to note that there are certain myths that are associated with negative connotations of aging in social paradigms, and these perceptions are continuously enforced by the discriminating attitude of care givers. Lack of attention from care givers and inability of policies to address the needs of old people has played major role in the perpetuation of these myths.

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