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## **IS THERE AGEISM IN CROATIAN PRINT MEDIA? CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSE**

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In societies where inter- and transgenerational transfer of family stories and histories, knowledge and customs, as well as intergenerational bonding have been reduced due to a nuclear family lifestyle and where various age groups do not share their everyday life experiences, media, both traditional and modern, are often an important source of information about all age groups. However, they often, deliberately or not, create an unfavorable public perception of a natural process of growing old, while youth is usually enthroned. Ageism is a term denoting discrimination of a person whose capabilities, mental capacities, knowledge, skills and social position are assessed and judged solely against their age, regardless of their individual traits.

Drawing on critical discourse analysis framework, in this paper we dealt with age-related examples collected from Croatian print media issued in the course of one month to establish how people past age of 65 were referred to and discursively represented and in which roles they appeared in texts. In order to provide a multi-axis perspective, a special focus was given to the examples at the intersection of age and other determinants of discrimination. Having collected and analyzed all the articles we can conclude that overt ageism transmitted via language is rather rare; however, there is latent ageism in representing older people in a limited number of contexts where they are not active participants in their lives, but passive recipients of aid, frail, sick, poor and often exposed to violence.

**Key words:** ageism, intersectionality, critical discourse analysis, Croatian print media

### **1. Introduction**

In Croatia any kind of overt public incitement to violence and hatred is prohibited by law, so are some forms of discriminatory speech which are prohibited by the Law on Suppression of Discrimination (NN 85/2008, 112/2012), the Law on Electronic Media (NN 111/21), as well as by a number of international treaties on the protection of human rights signed and ratified by the Republic of Croatia. Discrimination is defined as every prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups of people based on their race, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, looks, sexual orientation, marital status, state of health, ability, religion, social status, income or any other trait. In addition to discriminatory speech as a form of expression legally defined and prohibited by law, there are other, more covert forms of potentially offensive speech not prohibited and punishable, but which contribute to unsubstantiated hatred, prejudice and discrimination towards certain, often marginalized and minority groups (Lalić & Senta, 2020: 4). Ageism is one of those forms.

The term "ageism" was coined by the medical doctor and gerontologist Robert N. Butler in 1969 (Butler, 1969: 243; Achenbaum, 2015: 10) after he had noticed negative

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attitudes and contempt toward older persons and ageing. Butler (1980:8) further expanded on this phenomenon asserting that

There are three distinguishable yet interrelated aspects to the problem of ageism: 1) prejudicial attitudes toward the aged, toward old age, and toward the aging process, including attitudes held by the elderly themselves; 2) discriminatory practices against the elderly, particularly in employment, but in other social roles as well; and 3) institutional practices and policies which, often without malice, perpetuate stereotypic beliefs about the elderly, reduce their opportunities for a satisfactory life and undermine their personal dignity.

As stated by the Global report on ageism (2021:xv), ageism

can be institutional, interpersonal and self-directed. Institutional ageism refers to the laws, rules, social norms, policies and practices of institutions that unfairly restrict opportunities and systematically disadvantage individuals because of their age. Interpersonal ageism arises in interactions between two or more individuals, while self-directed ageism occurs when ageism is internalized and turned against oneself.

so reducing ageism is one of the goals to be attained by the United Nations as part of the Decade of Healthy Ageing.

One of the vehicles by which ageism circulates is language. Anecdotes, jokes, humorous stories, caricatures and birthday cards that contain some reference to old age are socially acceptable and perceived as amusing, but in fact they perpetuate ageism. According to the Global report on ageism (2021:xx), "Language conveys meaning and can fuel misconceptions that can lead to ageism. Words such as elderly, old or senior elicit stereotypes of older people as universally frail and dependent, and they are frequently used in a pejorative sense." Language is the most common tool of the media as they discursively construct and deconstruct public opinion on various topics, using stereotyping to categorize and simplify the reality (Edström, 2018), so they often approach ageing in a superficial manner, disregarding complexities of ageing process and differences between individuals.

Being discourse-oriented, this paper tackles the issue of age-related references in the Croatian print media and the representation of older people in texts; hence, it will provide the theoretical framework of ageing and ageism, the methodological framework, the aim of the research, the corpus, the results and discussion, and finally, the conclusion.

## **2. Theoretical framework of ageing and ageism**

Ageing is a natural process which cannot be avoided since it starts from the day of birth. Lifespan, in at least modern societies, has been substantially extended owing to better healthcare and diet. Although according to the United Nations persons aged 65 years or over (United Nations 2020:5) are considered older, people do not age in the same way, and this process is heavily dependent on living and working conditions, natural and social environment, including the family and the country a person was born into, so it is

difficult to mark the beginning of "old age" universally. This being so, finding a rational reason why anyone would be biased toward an older person is challenging, but, as it is the case with all prejudicial attitudes, there is nothing rational about them. According to Rozanova, Northcott & McDaniel (2006:375), age and ageing are categories differently constructed across societies and cultures, i.e. age is a cultural and social construct which helps categorize groups of people, but on the other hand, it limits the way of conceiving reality (Krekula, Nikander & Wilińska, 2018:38). "Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) directed towards others or oneself based on age" (Global report on ageism 2021:2) – stereotypes are generalized opinions on certain groups and their characteristics whereas prejudices are most usually negative emotional relations toward someone or something (Perišin & Kufrin, 2009). Age stereotypes can be benign in a sense that older people are seen as persons who deserve care and sympathy, and malign, which project intolerance and repulsiveness toward older people (Zovko & Vukobratović, 2017; Uzun et al. 2019). Ageism is the result of negative stereotypes and prejudices toward older people who are predominantly represented as a uniform group sharing more or less the same traits at the same level of physical or mental abilities, thus being de-individualized and devalued. This means that persons perceived by others as old are arbitrarily attributed "old age" traits regardless of their actual state of mind and body. In such generalizations and oversimplifications, older people are pictured as forgetful, frail, sickly, vulnerable, boring, depressed, passive, unable to learn, unable to use new technological devices, detached from everyday life, often poor, stingy, rigid, conservative, but also demanding, moody, quarrelsome, selfish and intolerable (Zovko & Vukobratović, 2017; Uzun, Kozumplik, Požgain, Kalinić & Mimica, 2019; Rusac, Štambuk & Verić, 2013). Many younger people, living in nuclear families, do not have any firsthand contact with older members of their extended families, so they adopt ready-made age stereotypes and prejudices as general truths, which are rarely questioned. As Hagestad and Uhlenberg say (2005:351), age segregation reproduces ageism, but it is in turn a consequence of ageism, which can be fought by encouraging cross-age contacts. Unfortunately, stereotypes and prejudices are only preconceptions used as a starting point in forming an attitude toward a person of certain age even before actually meeting them. On the other hand, older persons unintentionally accept and internalize stereotypes they are exposed to (Phelan, 2018:550) and start adapting their behavior to stereotypes and society expectations (Rusac et al., 2013:97). Stereotypes and prejudices lead to disrespect toward older persons, neglect, avoidance, lack of interest in their lives, experiences and needs (Rusac et al, 2013:98). Ageism is sometimes coupled, intertwined or intersected with other forms of discrimination and they all may reduce a person's quality of life, affect their self-perception, and consequently their social life. We could say that ageism, like many other discriminatory forms, results from ignorance.

The media, both traditional and new, apart from being the source of information, participate in discursively creating public perception of ageing and old age, selecting and emphasizing certain age aspects which in turn influence individual behavior (Wangler & Jansky, 2023:2). As intergenerational family bonding has weakened and older members do not share experiences of younger ones (and vice versa), media contents on ageing, where ageing is unfavorably presented, shape people's perception of their imminent future. As Hagestad and Uhlenberg point out (2005:349), separation by age is most vividly present in language as a central force, which underscores "us/them distinctions between age categories and marks differences in life styles". Marketing, having commercial interest, maintains such differences in the media targeted for distinct age groups. Mautner (2007:53) further notices that age is discursively constructed, meaning that life-span is divided into age categories, labeled *young*, *middle-aged*, *older*, *old* and people are ascribed certain features and qualities allegedly typical of a category. However, labels affect people's self-image and relations toward their environment and they end up "discursively constructing versions of themselves and their speaking partners in age-salient terms" (Coupland, 1997:34) and they "partake in self-inflicted ageism" (Krekula, et al., 2018:37).

In mediated societies, media consumers become obsessed with the ideal of eternal youth and beauty and terrified of ageing, which leaves ample space for stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination leading to ageist attitudes additionally promulgated by film industry. On the other hand, older persons will be present "in limited contexts and in visually narrow ways. This is typical, for example, in advertising, where food, pharmaceuticals, health aids and financial/insurance products and services are the categories of product where adverts most often use older models" (Yläanne, 2024:3). Kelly, Watson, Pankratova, & Pedzeni (2016) dealt with ageing identity construction in popular music texts produced in English-speaking countries, where popular music is understood as "a powerful form of mass media which has potential to have a penetrating effect on the psyche of people who are exposed to it" (2016:1332) and where negative perception of ageing also prevails as lyrics are usually created from a younger person's perspective.

By intentionally or unintentionally marginalizing older people, the media often suggest that older people, "especially women, are not newsworthy, interesting, or desirable" (Edström, 2018:79), since they no longer hold much social power and influence, which brings us to the intersection between age and gender, or "gendered ageism" (Krekula et al., 2018). Media hype is usually created around young women who attract consumers and thus bring money to media owners. Older women seem to be multiply marginalized and less visible in the media than men, even though older women outnumber older men in most modern societies and tend to live longer: "women are valued for their youth and attractiveness but devalued as they age" (Stollznow, 2020:233).

### 3. Methodological framework

As we already stated that discourse helps construct certain viewpoints, and the media help circulate them, we critically analyzed age-related discourse in the Croatian print media. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), or critical discourse studies (CDS), as the method of our choice, focuses on linguistic and semiotic aspects of social problems, not solely on language use *per se*. CDA postulates (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2003, 2010, 2018; Fairclough & Wodak 1997) represent discourse as a form of social practice, meaning that "a discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them" (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:258). Discourse (and its users) can produce and sustain power relations within society and present certain prejudicial assumptions as common facts. Being an interdisciplinary approach, critical discourse analysis dissects language structures and helps unveil power relations hidden beneath layers of expressions, many of which have become petrified and commonsensical, and it raises awareness about some detrimental language practices. Not only that: CDA demonstrates its inclination toward the discriminated and oppressed and proposes ways to fight discrimination (Fairclough, 2018). In that vein we can say that media texts reflect current age-related trends, and also help create stereotypes, in accordance with Fairclough's postulate that discourse is shaped by social conditions, i. e., they are reflected in the discourse, but the discourse in turn shapes social conditions and affects changes in attitudes, thinking and acceptance of some age-related phenomena in society. Discourse can also be constructed around the *us/them* opposition, where *them*, older people, are usually attributed some not very desirable properties as opposed to *us*, authors, readers, still not old, who are therefore ascribed more positive traits within Van Dijk's ideological square (1993, 1996, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). As to discrimination, it is the topic of the discourse-historical approach by Ruth Wodak and her associates who analyze it from the CDA perspective (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

Various papers have been written on ageing and other age-related topics drawing on the CDA framework. Stamou (2018) states that CDS sees identity constituted in an active interplay between the individual's activity and structured society, age being one of the identity constituents. Fealy, McNamara, Treacy & Lyons (2012) focused on "discursive formations of ageing and age identities in print media in Ireland" using the CDA analysis instruments to identify representational strategies in referring to older people. Chen (2015) gives a critical discourse analysis of older people representation in Taiwanese newspapers, Imran & Budarick (2013) critically analyze Malaysian newspapers and Shimoni (2023) older people's portrayal in newspaper coverage of Covid-19 in the UK and Serbia (Milojević, 2021).

This paper focuses on lexical choices which constitute age-related discourse. According to Fairclough (2001:92), in research concerning lexical choices there are formal

features which can appear or not in any text, so an analysis should provide answers to the following questions:

1) What *experiential* values do words have? This question concerns ideological differences between texts in their representations of the world. What classification schemes are drawn upon? This questions concerns the way words collocate. Are there words which are ideologically contested? Is there *rewording* or *overwording* (using many words which are near synonyms)? What ideologically significant meaning relations (*synonymy*, *hyponymy*, *antonymy*) are there between words?

2) What *relational* values do words have? How does a text's choice of wordings depend on and help create social relationships between participants? Are there euphemistic expressions? Are there markedly formal or informal words?

3) What *expressive* values do words have?

4) What metaphors are used?

For that matter we deal with representational strategies (Machin & Mayr, 2012:77-88) employed in the Croatian print media in reference to older people (personalization, impersonalization, individualization, collectivization, specification, genericization, nomination, functionalization, anonymization, aggregation, *us* vs. *them* division, suppression). We can also differentiate between referential strategies and predicational strategies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: xiii), where referential strategies indicate how persons are named and referred to linguistically, and where predicational strategies demonstrate "what traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to" those persons. Predicational strategies are realized by

*attributes* (in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctive clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups), by *predicates* or *predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns*, by *collocations*, by explicit *comparisons*, *similes*, *metaphors* and other *rhetorical figures* (including *metonymies*, *hyperboles*, *litotes* and *euphemisms*) and by more or less implicit *allusions*, *evocations* and *presuppositions/implications*.

(Reisigl & Wodak, 2001:54-55)

Still, the authors say that these two strategies cannot always be clearly separated from one another.

### **3.1. Aim**

The aim of this paper is to provide answers to the following questions:

1) What strategies have been employed in the Croatian print media to refer to older people?

2) Are these strategies constructed in a stereotypical and a prejudicial manner?

3) What role do older individuals have in the articles?

4) In what contexts (economic, business, cultural, demographic, recreational, sport, leisure) do older people appear?

5) How does age intersect with other dimensions of identity and probable inequalities?

Given the fact that Croatia has a legal framework against discrimination, the results should show whether the printed media allow overt or covert ageist expressions and attitudes in reference to people past age 65, whether older people are visible in the media as actors or as just passive recipients and whether gender and other aspects of discrimination even further affect representations of older persons.

As stated by Machin and Mayr (2012:77), there is no neutral way of representing a person, so the choice of a linguistic form directs attention to certain constituents of identity. In order to find answers to the abovementioned questions, we look for lexical choices used in discursive construction of age identities, i.e. in representational, referential and predication strategies, and subject them to critical discourse analysis in order to see how discursive practices of production, distribution and consumption of texts affect and change social practices.

### **3.2. Corpus**

For this research we collected samples from the Croatian print media issued during one month, specifically December 2023. This month was selected randomly to avoid targeting any particular social context (e.g., a pension increase, political elections) that might result in a higher frequency of references to older individuals.

We conducted a thorough review of three daily newspapers, one regional (*Slobodna Dalmacija*, hereafter SD) and two national (*Večernji list* and *Jutarnji list*, hereafter VL and JL respectively). Examples were extracted from SD for the period between December 1 and 10; from VL between December 11 and 20; from JL between December 21 and January 1, 2024. SD included the TV guide *Reflektor*; VL featured some supplements such as a TV guide (*Ekran*), *Lokalni.hr* (2 issues) and *Digitalna Hrvatska*; JL included the TV guide *Studio* (2 issues) and *Universitas*. These supplements' format, *Universitas* excepting, was a half-page of the newspaper. The total number of pages reviewed was 480 for SD, 590 for VL, and 672 for JL.

Furthermore, we examined the following weeklies: *Nacional*, *7Dnevno* (which are political news magazines) *Lider* (a business magazine) and *Gloria* and *Story* (lifestyle magazines). We also reviewed *Globus*, a biweekly political news magazine. The *7Dnevno* news magazine included a holiday supplement in a half-page format, and *Lider* also featured a supplement titled *Poslovna Hrvatska*. Additionally, we analyzed *Poslovni dnevnik*, a daily business newspaper, and reviewed all the issues published in December,

along with the supplements *Mladi vizionar* and *Financije za 5*. No references to age were found in this publication, which is also indicative in its own right.

In Table 1 we presented, along with aforementioned numbers, the number of articles with some reference to old age.

Publication	Category	Number of pages	Number of articles with some age reference
Slobodna Dalmacija	daily	480	16
Večernji list	daily	590	34
Jutarnji list	daily	672	31
Nacional	weekly	352	6
7Dnevno	weekly	388	11
Lider	weekly	452	1
Gloria	weekly	336	4
Story	weekly	368	1
Globus	biweekly	136	3
Poslovni dnevnik	daily	583	none
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4357</b>	<b>107</b>

Table 1. Publications, number of pages and number of articles

#### 4. Results and discussion

After reading each article in each publication, we established a set of categories reflecting contexts in which older people had been mentioned. We listed those categories in which older persons were **the common topic** of the article in at least 2 of the three **dailies** (Table 2):

Contextual categories	Daily publications (no. of articles)		
	Slobodna Dalmacija	Večernji list	Jutarnji list
1) care for pensioners by local or central governments	2 (financial support; new pension fund)	4 (lower prices, Christmas and Easter bonuses, free transportation, larger sums for pensioners provided by a city council)	3 (extra money for a number of pensioners, financial aid, free transportation)
2) old, poor and sick persons; pensioners' hard life	1	-----	1
3) older women fallen victim of violence; older women in jeopardy from poverty and social exclusion	1	1	----- -
4) a text about or an interview with a prominent older person (their age is always mentioned)	1	3	5



5) death of a prominent older person (their age is always mentioned)	----- -	1	4
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Table 2. Categories with an age reference in at least 2 dailies or in 2 articles in the same daily

The category which is common in most **weeklies** is presented in Table 3:

Contextual categories	Weekly publications (no. of articles)					
	Globus (bi-weekly)	Gloria	Lider	Nacional	Story	7Dnevno
1) a text about or an interview with a prominent older person (their age is always mentioned)	1	3	1	4	-----	1

Table 3. The category with an age reference in most weeklies

From these tables (Table 1, Table 2) it is evident that older persons are the topics in the daily newspaper articles more frequently than in weeklies (Table 3) and they appear in more varied contexts.

In this paper we deal only with categories 1, 2 and 3 in **dailies** where older people are represented **collectively**, i.e., referred to with collective nouns (the rest will be presented in another paper). In these texts, older people are not active participants, but in some way taken care of by local or central governments and given some financial aid, support, provided some leisure activities, because they are not only old, but also poor and sick, which is often implicitly suggested. Here are some extracts from the articles in each newspaper:

1) *SD*: Standard i način života **pripadnika treće dobi**, ne moramo to posebno naglašavati, bitno se razlikuju od zemlje do zemlje na europskom prostoru. Dok si **bogati umirovljenici iz zapadnih zemalja** mogu priuštiti putovanja i kupnju kuća na osunčanim mediteranskim destinacijama, u Hrvatskoj je svaki treći **umirovljenik u kategoriji siromaštva**.

2) *VL*: Dva milijuna eura bit će iz proračuna izdvojeno za pilot-projekt besplatnoga prijevoza vlakom **umirovljenika i osoba starijih od 65 godina** u idućoj godini (...). Cilj je projekta poboljšati kvalitetu života **umirovljenika**, potaknuti održivu mobilnost, smanjiti troškove života za **stariju populaciju** te pridonijeti ekološki odgovornijem načinu putovanja **starije populacije**. Pilot-projektom oko 1,2 milijuna **umirovljenika i osoba starijih od 65 godina** imat će mogućnost neograničeno koristiti željeznički prijevoz (...).

3) *JL*: U Hrvatskoj su **najugroženiji umirovljenici** – svaki peti ne može si priuštiti meso ili ribu svaki drugi dan.

As it can be seen from the extracts above, older people in Croatia are collectively, referentially named as "pripadnici treće dobi" metaphorically, "umirovljenici", "osobe

starije od 65 godina", "starija populacija" (English: *third age persons, pensioners, persons older than 65, older population*) who are not directly addressed, and on whose life someone else decides. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, as equivalents, and sometimes one along with the other, which suggests that there is a difference between "umirovljenici" and "osobe starije od 65 godina", and that being a pensioner does not mean that the person is over 65 and vice versa. In these articles older people are not active participants but beneficiaries passivized and restricted by their life conditions (predications "najugroženiji", "u kategoriji siromaštva" an adjective and an adverbial; English: *most affected by poverty, categorized as poor*, respectively) and grim future, unlike their rich counterparts in Western countries who can actively lead their lives to their liking. These referential and predication strategies at the intersection of old age, low income and social status do not suggest any overt ageism, but it is the social environment and lack of financial support which indicate that older people are socially neglected and excluded.



Večernji list  
December 23, 2023

There is a subgroup of older women, living in adverse conditions. Intersectional examples bring more tones of misery and sorrow:

4) SD: Prijavite sve one koji obezvređuju zlatne godine slogan je projekta "puSHEd" u sklopu kojeg je organizirana izložba "Nasilje u sjeni: Izložba o dizanju svijesti o starijim ženama žrtvama nasilja". (...) Ovu kampanju je pokrenula udruga "B.a.b.e" kako bi se potaknuo veći broj prijava nasilja nad **ženama starije životne dobi**. (...) Prema podacima kojima raspolažu organizator, **žene starije životne dobi** nadležnim institucijama rjeđe prijavljuju obiteljsko nasilje **zbog svoje ekonomske ovisnosti ili ovisnosti o članovima obitelji** uvjetovane zdravstvenim stanjem, a koji su često počinitelji nasilja. (...) Ako gledamo statistički, **starije žene koje su preživjele dugotrajno nasilje** mogu imati motiv prijaviti nasilje, no nedostatak senzibilizirane pomoći i podrške može dovesti do odustajanja. Uz to, nerijetko se fizičke i mentalne posljedice nasilja otpisuju kao dio procesa **starenja**. Zbog toga, kako mi volimo reći, nasilje nad **starijim ženama** postaje nevidljivo i njihovi glasovi se utišavaju. (...) Osobe koje žele prijaviti nasilje nad **ženama starije životne dobi** ili trebaju podršku (kao žrtva ili osoba bliska žrtvi) mogu to učiniti (...).

5) VL: U Hrvatskoj su **žene starije od 65 godina najugroženija skupina i u najvećem riziku od siromaštva**, potlačenosti i socijalne isključenosti i to je zaista tragično jer cijeli se život brinu o drugima, a na koncu **starost** dočekaju gotovo **gladne** i da si ne mogu priuštiti najosnovnije uvjete za život – zaključila je Ivana Kekin.

These intersectional examples reveal that the social problem of violence toward older women has been recognized and that it worsens as women get older and are unable to find some financial support outside their families where they are often exposed to violent behavior of their relatives. This is a new context in which only some older women may appear and is related to lack of financial means, poverty, poor health, shame, lack of education, which all make them dependent on their molesters. These extracts also reveal that there is awareness in what conditions some women live and that they should be helped. Older women are referred to collectively as "žene starije životne dobi", "starije žene" or "žene starije od 65 godina" (English: *women of advanced age, older women, women over 65 years of age*) and accompanied with predication strategies such a relative clause "koje su preživjele dugotrajno nasilje", an adjective "najugroženije", and adverbials "u najvećem riziku od siromaštva", "zbog svoje ekonomske ovisnosti ili ovisnosti o članovima obitelji" (English: *who have survived a long-term violence, most affected, most at risk of poverty, due to their economic dependence or dependence on family members*). We do not find ageism in these referential and predication strategies; on the contrary, ageism ensues from social dynamics described in the extracts and is something to be fought against.

Other categories which appear in only one of the **dailies** are as follows:

- in *SD*: care for older homeless persons and 2 articles on careless and insensitive attitude of the government toward pensioners which pushes them into poverty;

6) Tu su, pored nas. Neki vidljivi **poput starice u trajektnoj luci** o kojoj smo već pisali, mnogi potpuno **neprimijećeni u skrivenim zakutcima grada**. (...) **Stariji ljudi**, ali i oni mlađi, dugotrajno **nezaposleni, bez osobnih dokumenata, zdravstvenog osiguranja ili ikakvih primanja**. (...) Zanimljivo je kako ono (prihvatilište, op.a.) u Zagrebu, (...) u nazivu nije bilo niti spomena te riječi. Zvalo se **Prihvatilište za starije osobe**. Još tada je bila sramota biti **beskućnik**...

7) Po službenim podacima Grada Splita, čak 3484 splitska **umirovljenika** (...) mjesečno preživljava na mirovini manjoj od 300 eura. (...) neki od njih preživljavaju s mirovinama manjim od 119 eura, (...). Kada se sve ove brojke uzmu u obzir, može se reći da gotovo 3500 **umirovljenika** na području grada Splita živi **u teškom siromaštvu**.

8) Nakon, pretpostavljamo, dugotrajnog razmišljanja zaključili su (gradske vlasti, op.a.) da će božićnice podijeliti samo **penzićima koji imaju manje od famoznih 292 eura**, a njih je oko tri tisuće. (...) I nakon toga uzalud samohvala splitskih vlasti kako će, eto, **splitski umirovljenici**

dobiti možda najveće božićnice (od 80 do 150 eura) u cijeloj državi. (...) Dakle, ako je znak pažnje i dobre volje (...), pogotovo kada su **umirovljenici** u pitanju, onda taj znak pažnje zaslužuju baš svi. Upravo kod **umirovljenika** ne smije biti nikakve podjele. (...) I onda u svim tim milijunima (milijardama) slijedi „pozitivna diskriminacija“ na **umirovljenicima, onima kojih se ne čuje i ne vidi**, (...).

One extract (6) gives an insight into an intersection of ageing and homelessness and two extracts (7 and 8) intersect with poverty. Extract 6 is an extract from the text on homeless people and has “starica” (English: *old lady*), used here as a referential term of endearment which is supposed to provoke some emotions of sympathy, pity and sorrow for an old person being homeless. Older people (“stariji ljudi”) are predicationally presented also as “nezaposleni” (adjective) and an adverbial “bez osobnih dokumenata, zdravstvenog osiguranja ili ikakvih primanja” (English: *jobless, without documents, health insurance or any income*) The extract also shows a shift in the social status of shelters for the homeless over the years which used to be called “shelters for older people”. Being old was a euphemism as “it was a shame to be homeless” where old age blended with homelessness or one state included the other. Extracts 7 and 8 refer to the Split city council’s decision to allocate some aid to pensioners, predicationally referred to as those that live in utter poverty, “u teškom siromaštvu” (adverbial) and in an apposition “onima kojih se ne čuje i ne vidi” (English: *those that are never heard nor seen*). Here, they are once called “penzići”, a colloquial and diminutive term which sometimes has a pejorative and derogatory tone, but here it is a term of endearment referring collectively to a group who needs help, protection, as they are living on the brink of poverty. It is accompanied with a predication in the form of a relative clause (“koji imaju manje od famoznih 292 eura”; English: *that have less than 292 euros*). We could say that authors of these articles show certain sensitivity and compassion toward older people, inadvertently patronizing them, which is in accordance with point 3 of Butler’s definition of ageism (1980:8).

- in VL: improvement of living conditions for older persons in the EU; an older person in a lawsuit; Croatian population is getting old (2 articles); European population is getting old; an extra bonus for each child for female pensioners; improvement of living conditions for older war veterans; leisure activities of older persons; accidents in nursing homes (2 articles); city council reception for teachers that have just retired.

9) Treći stup mjera je osnaživanje **starijih generacija**, održavanje njihove dobrobiti putem reformi i odgovarajućim politikama tržišta rada koje bi se trebale prilagoditi njihovim potrebama.

Older people are collectivized and referred to by the term “starije generacije” (English: *older generations*) and again presented as beneficiaries of certain measures

created somewhere by some politicians concerned about their well-being. It seems that all older people are incapable of finding ways to improve their lives if they have become the subject of policy at the level of EU.

10) Petero stanara svjedočili su da je kratko vrijeme bio „pravi zoološki vrt“, ali više ne jer je gospođa **stara, ima 80 godina, slabo pokretna, jedva i rijetko izlazi, gotovo ne vidi te ima pomoć u kući**. (...) Iseljenje **stare i bolesne osobe** iz gradskog stana nikako nije razmjerno cilju koji se želi postići, a niti je nužno u demokratskom društvu.

Here, the case of a lady predicationally referred to as old, ill and 80 with adjectives, a number, and simple clauses (“stara, ima 80 godina, slabo pokretna, jedva i rijetko izlazi, gotovo ne vidi te ima pomoć u kući”; English: *she is ill, eighty, almost immobile, hardly ever goes out, almost blind and has a help*) about to be evicted is presented in such a way as to provoke compassion and sympathy in readers, which is the author’s emphatic move. The anonymous lady is described as a victim, her age is precisely stated, and so is her declining health.

11) Stanovništvo Hrvatske iz godine u godinu sve je **starije**, sela su sve praznija, a jedino što se povećava jest broj napuštenih kuća i stanova u kojima nema žive duše. (...) **Proces starenja** se nastavlja i nema naznaka da će idućih desetljeća stati. (...) Očekuje, kaže, nastavak **dugoročnog starenja** stanovništva. (...) samo se udjel **starijih od 60 godina** u ukupnom stanovništvu povećao. (...) I povjerenica Europske komisije za demokraciju i demografiju Dubravka Šuica neki je dan upozorila da je **starenje stanovništva** najveći demokratski izazov, posebno za zdravstvene i mirovinske sustave.

12) (...) u Hrvatskoj je najviše samačkih kućanstava što će u zemlji koja se ubraja u **najstarije nacije** Europe i svijeta i nema razvijenu skrb o **starijima** biti sve veći problem. (...) Osim toga više od četvrtine stanovništva u Zagrebu **starije je od 60 godina**. Zagreb bi mogao imati problema sa sve većim rastom **starog stanovništva** (...). (...) taj udio samačkih kućanstava u zemlji **ostarjelog stanovništva** je zabrinjavajući.

13) Europa ima problem – **stanovništvo stari**, novo se jako malo rađa (...). (...) ali demografska putanja u EU je jasna: kao društvo **starimo**. Do 2070. godine 30 posto europskih državljana bit će **starije od 65 godina**, a do kraja stoljeća imat ćemo više **starijih od 80 godina** nego mlađih od 20. (...) Da su **ljudi stariji od 70 godina manje zdravi**, nije novost.

Extracts 11, 12 and 13 exemplify the so-called “apocalyptic demography”, a term used by some authors to underscore the tone of alarm in population projections (Fealy et al. 2012), here the problem being the ageing population of Europe. Old, “star”, whether as an adjective, or used in formation of a noun or a verb, is presented as a social problem. It appears in referential (“starenje”, udjel starijih od 60”, “ljudi stariji od 70 godina”, “zemlja ostarjelog stanovništva”, “starenje stanovništva”; English: *getting old, share of people over 60, people older than 70, country of ageing population, population ageing*) or

predicational ("starije", "manje zdravi"; English: *older, less healthy*) strategies as adjectives. Getting old, ageing is a phenomenon here described as a nuisance which has to be dealt with and removed, because others, *us*, who are not old, might have a problem with it, though the problem is not clearly specified.

14) (...) dodatak za djecu moglo bi dobiti do 350 tisuća žena umirovljenih u ranijem razdoblju (...). (...) Hrvatska ima oko 660 tisuća **umirovljenica**, a najbrojnije korisnice starosnih mirovina primaju oko 425 eura (...).

15) ... promjene u populaciji s ciljem poboljšanja materijalnih i radnih prava te poboljšanja skrbi za hrvatske **branitelje starije dobi**. (...) Među najvećim izazovima s kojima se susreće Ministarstvo je **starenje braniteljske populacije**, (...).

Extracts 14 and 15 refer to two social groups, women pensioners, referred to as "umirovljenice" and older war veterans, "branitelji starije dobi", whose grim living conditions should be improved by some proactive measures. Again, they are beneficiaries, waiting for financial aid which could alleviate their suffering due to low income.

16) Iako bi se isprva možda dalo naslutiti da su plesnjaci rezervirani za **starije**, podij je bio ispunjen različitim generacijama. (...) Došle su, govore, prkositi i niskim temperaturama i **85. godini života**. (...) Drago joj je što se napokon, u ovo blagdansko doba, mislilo i na **umirovljenike** kojima će priča s Mažuranca zasigurno zagrijati srce.

Extract 16 is a rare example of an older people representation where older ladies are not beneficiaries receiving aid, but actors readily involved in festive activities although they are 85. The age is pointed out as an adversary to be fought against.

17) Trebale bi to biti sigurne oaze u kojima će **starije osobe** mirno i dostojanstveno provesti posljednje godine života. (...) No, **domovi za starije osobe** u Hrvatskoj su, nažalost, već više puta pokazali svoje drugo lice, postajući grobnicom za one **najbespomoćnije**. Svjedoči tome najnovija tragedija iz privatnoga Toplog doma u Osijeku, gdje je **75-godišnju korisnicu** u ponedjeljak popodne teretno dizalo gotovo dekapitalo. (...) Prisjetimo se i kobne 2020. godine, kada je u dva različita požara u **privatnim smještajima za starije osobe** život izgubilo čak devet korisnika. (...) postavlja se pitanje kvalitete smještaja u **ustanovama za starije i nemoćne osobe**, kao i kontrole te kvalitete. (...) Obitelji su prezaposlene, **starimo kao nacija**, mladi iseljavaju, o **umirovljenicima** se nerijetko nema tko brinuti kada to više ne mogu činiti sami. (...). Teško je i pojmiti kako se osjećala obitelj **75-godišnje polupokretne žene** kada su joj u ponedjeljak popodne javili kako je **nesretnoj starici** dizalo presjeklo vrat. (...) No, što reći – policija dva dana nije smatrala potrebnim ni da najšturije moguće izvijesti o pogibiji korisnice **doma za starije osobe**.

18) – teretno je dizalo prignječilo **75-godišnju korisnicu** (...). (...) no **nesretna je starica** na mjestu preminula. (...) vidjeli smo da se radi o smrtnom stradavanju **starije žene**. (...) No,

moгуće je kako se **starica** u kobnom trenutku nagnula prema unutrašnjosti dizala kada ju je ono prikliještilo i presjeklo joj vrat.

Extracts 17 and 18 refer to an accident in a nursing home ("dom za starije i nemoćne", "ustanova za starije i nemoćne", "privatni smještaj za starije"), which served as a reminder of other accidents that occurred in the past. The older people are named collectively, "starije osobe", "umirovljenici", "najbespomoćniji" (English: *older persons, pensioners, the most helpless*) but when the passage tackled the case of the lady who was decapitated, she was first introduced in a more official and informative manner as "75-godišnja korisnica" (English: *the 75-year-old tenant*), and "75-godišnja polupokretna žena" (English: *the 75-year-old almost immobile woman*) but then "nesretna starica" (English: *poor old lady*) and "starija žena" (English: *old lady*). These lexical choices range from the rather neutral terms that state some facts to the more emotionally loaded terms suggesting helplessness and are supposed to bring out compassion and sympathy in the readers. The old persons are described as sick, frail, weak and, by a stroke of bad luck, beheaded.

19) (...) svečano primanje za 59 učitelja, nastavnika i profesora koji su u svom radnom vijeku podučavali djecu, a sada su otišli **u mirovinu**. (...) gradonačelnik Denis Kralj čestitao je odlazak **u zasluženu mirovinu**.

This short extract testifies to the care and concern which the mayor of a town expressed to his citizens, holding a reception for retired teachers who are referred to not as pensioners, but defined in terms of their function as "učitelji, nastavnici i profesori" (English: *elementary and high-school teachers*) who happen to have retired. Ageing is hinted at obliquely by referring to "mirovina" and "zaslužena mirovina" (English: *well-deserved retirement*).

- in JL: 2 articles on older **individuals** as active musicians; are older **individuals**, politicians capable of doing their work?; older **individuals**, people whose property was destroyed by an earthquake.

20) **Stari idealist Neil Young**, kao ni **stari cinik Bob Dylan**, ne pokazuje znakove posustajanja (...)

21) Sve je na kocki, a Gabriel, gledajući i unatrag, pred nas postavlja pitanje o tome kuda hrlimo; ovaj put kao **stari mudrac** zabrinut za one koji će ostati živi nakon njegove smrti. (...) Jednostavno, za tržište singlova Gabriel je **prestar**, ali za tržište albuma njegov „i/o“ jak je adut (...).

Extracts 20 and 21 refer to two musicians who belong to the group of people over 65, but here "stari idealist/cinik/mudrac" (English: *old idealist/cynic/wise man*) do not necessarily refer to age only, as it is not specifically mentioned, but to their long presence

and creative experience in music. Therefore, a predication in an adjective “prestar” (English: *too old*) again is not a reference solely to the musician’s age, but his probable unwillingness to change and conform to current trends in show business, a trait which is often attributed to older people.

22) Zvučat će brutalno, ali krugovi oko kluba već izvjesno vrijeme vladajuću garnituru u žargonu nazivaju ‘**mirogojskim mališanima**’. Predsjednik Barišić je navršio **87 godina** i još se nije umorio, ako će suradnici inzistirati on će prihvatiti još jedan mandat, dok Franjo Gregurić kao glas razuma iz skupštinskih klupa ima **84 ljeta**. Njegov najživahniji saveznik zove se Mladen Vedriš i u posljednjim je previranjima isplivao kao favorit za sljedećeg suparnika, ali zainteresirana javnost ima pravo znati da je **73-godišnji gospodin** upravo pobijedio tešku bolest. U njihovu susjedstvu sjede Nikola Hanžel, dr. Većeslav Bergman i dr. Vladimir Gašparović, redom gospoda **u osmom životnom desetljeću**. Dinamo vapi za pomlađivanjem i nekom novom snagom.

This extract shows the journalist’s awareness of how insulting the overtly ageist syntagma “mirogojski mališani” (English: *the Mirogoj little fellows*, Mirogoj - a graveyard in Zagreb) may be as referential strategy, implying that they are soon to be dead, but the whole extract is about the age of well-known members in the Dinamo soccer club assembly who are individualized and personalized in their representations. Their age is predicationally added to their names. Despite this awareness of possible insult, the author does not fail to state how old they are and, accordingly, are not up to the task of running the club due to their advanced age, for which no evidence is provided. Still, the author avoids explicitness and in the last sentence resorts to latent ageism saying that the club needs a younger, new force.

23) U Majskim Poljanama **umirovljenici** Vasilj Kukuleča i njegova teško bolesna supruga Kata još žive u montažnoj kućici pokraj teško oštećene kuće.

In extract 23 we find unexpected poverty in one family of two pensioners caused by an earthquake, compounded by an illness expressed by a predication strategy (“teško bolesna”; English: *seriously ill*) The couple are referred to as “umirovljenici”, which indicates their age is over 65, but they are personalized and individualized actors. It is not the term itself which provokes sympathy, but their difficult situation coming from adverse living conditions.

In the **weeklies**, there is one text on “well ageing” in *Gloria* and one text on a marriage of an older person with a much younger one in *Story*:

24) *Gloria*: **Well-aging** je dobrodošla alternativa spornom **anti-agingu koji starenje proglašava neželjenim** i poziva na borbu protiv njega, ignorirajući činjenicu da je to jednostavno



prirodna pojava. Anti-aging napokon više nije najmoćnija beauty krilatica - štoviše, našao se na listi nepoželjnih izraza. (...) Mnoga znanstvena istraživanja pokazuju da je upravo **stav prema starenju ključan za dugovječnost i dobar izgled**.

In this extract there is no reference to a person, but to well-ageing as a new trend opposed to anti-ageing which encompasses treatments and techniques aimed at avoiding, stopping or even reversing the natural process of growing old. Illustrative enough, it reveals that the attitude toward ageing is just part of a current trend, not a fact or general truth.

25) *Story*:... a ovu ljubavnu melodramu s elementima farse nisu pripustili (s greškom, op.a.) ni Zlatko Mateša i Blanka Kačer. (...) Da je **74-godišnji predsjednik Hrvatskog olimpijskog odbora u vezi s 44-godišnjom pročelnica** (s greškom, op.a.) **Katedre za građansko pravo Pravnog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Splitu i ravnateljica Poslijediplomskog specijalističkog studija**, doznalo se u rujnu, a nakon vjenčanja par nije krio koliko je sretan.

Lifestyle magazines bring stories about people more or less famous. In this extract two people, individualized and personalized, are interesting enough because of an age difference between them. Age is the first determinant in their representation as a referential strategy, not their professions or functions. Despite the light tone of the article and the alleged report on a theatrical play, what is intriguing for prospective readers is the marriage of two persons in which one person is well over 65, but still active in the political life, and a younger lady. Their marriage does not fit some usual social norms as there is an active older person, not corresponding to a picture of a Croatian pensioner, sick, frail and poor, and a much younger woman.

In *7Dnevno* there is a text on Croatian population getting old, and then 2 texts about age as a factor which might restrict an **individual's** political activity.

26) **Smanjivanje broja i starenje stanovništva** može imati velike gospodarske i društvene posljedice na koje moramo zajednički pronaći djelotvoran odgovor, uključujući i aktiviranje potencijala hrvatske dijaspore, ali i drugih demografskih resursa.

Extract 26 is another example of „apocalyptic demography“, which, of course, calls for urgent measures in Croatia. Shrinking and ageing population, „smanjivanje broja i starenje stanovništva“, is referred to as a process with immense negative consequences although they are not stated, nor are the reasons for these processes. Ageing is once again perceived as a problem. We are presented with a process where the actors are not present, but „we“ have to act. The process of ageing is depersonalized and it does not concern „us“ who have to oppose it somehow. Those who are concerned, but not explicitly referred to,

that is, older people, are singled out from the total population and branded as contributors to economic and social imbalance.

27) Karamarku su nadolazeći parlamentarni izbori posljednja prilika da to i učini, ako ništa drugo, onda **zbog godina**.

In this extract the author states that the former politician Tomislav Karamarko will be kicked out of some future political race because of his age (not exactly stated) even though there are political figures who are still active despite their age. In the predication "zbog godina" (adverbial) (English: *on account of his age*) the author denies Karamarko the opportunity to run again for some position, not explaining why his age would be an obstacle for candidacy. This is one of the rare examples of overt ageism.

28) Poput kasnog Sovjetskog Saveza, Sjedinjene Države su **gerontokracija**. Predsjednik (Joe Biden, op.a.) sutra **puni 81 godinu**. Donald Trump, njegov glavni konkurent za mjesto, u lipnju je **proslavio 77. rođendan. Prosječna dob senatora je 64 godine**.



7Dnevno, Dec. 15, 2023

Extract 28 brings some explicit statements why the author sees some politicians, here individualized, personalized and functionalized, as inappropriate to run for some position: it is their age stated with predication strategies. Age of these politicians is singled out as problematic and the United States are compared with the Soviet Union, country notorious for its old politicians. The sentence below the picture says that "as in America now, the USSR used to be run by old men", that is, "gerontocracy", a noun used as predication strategy. However, the author does not say what is wrong with older people being in power, or supposes that it is self-explanatory and provides no further explanation. This is again one of the rare cases of overt ageist terms, but it is unlikely for powerful politicians to feel too discriminated by some ageist reference in a newspaper.

In the above analysis we looked for expressions that were used in representational, referential and predication strategies when referring to older people in various contexts. Upon the analysis it can be stated that the exact age as a determinant accompanies names of **individualized**, **personalized** and sometimes **functionalized** older people (extracts 22, 25, 28), acts in attributive or predicative adjectives functioning as classifiers. The exact age is there used synecdochically, that is, this identity feature is picked out and foregrounded. The name may be premodified with an adjective "stari" in the extracts with the two musicians (extracts 20, 21) where this strategy connotes experience, shrewdness and knowledge, not frailty and incapability. There is one case though where the author uses an overt ageist term as a quote (extract 22), "mirogojski mališani": the author is not the source of it, but quotes it. Underlying ageism of the article evident in age determinants used as adjectives reflects a common opinion that older people are not able to perform some duties. Similar cases are two articles (extracts 27, 28) where the authors express their doubt whether the politicians in question, being of certain advanced age, could run their country or assume some political function. Here, ageism is overt in referential and predication strategies, and it helps create a belief that older people over certain age should retreat from all duties. However, politicians are in power and they decide whether to act or retreat; they are not an endangered minority. Finally, there is only one case (extract 23) describing the complex situation of a married couple where old age is encumbered with poverty and sickness, but the referential strategy is rather neutral, directed to the fact that these people are no longer employed.

The case of an older lady (extract 10) who could be evicted stands out since the lady's name remains unknown, but her age is stated. The age, paired with adjectives describing her poor health help describe the situation where an older person is treated unfairly by the city authorities, where she is just pushed to and fro, unable to govern her life. She is old, nameless and passive, just like many older people represented collectively. Another case (extracts 17, 18) is that of an anonymous old lady referred to with referential terms inviting compassion as she was killed in a gruesome accident. Again, she was a passive participant not in command of her life.

In the cases where older people are represented **collectively** and **impersonally** by referential and predication strategies, the lexical choices are few but recurrent: "umirovljenici", "osobe starije od 60 (65, 70)", "starija populacija", "pripadnici treće dobi", "stariji ljudi", "starije generacije", and once "penzići" as a term of endearment. These are all lexical generalizations sometimes used to describe facts, sometimes as compassionate terms. Older people are not defined in terms of their functions, that is, what they do; they are nominated in terms of who they are collectively and anonymously where only one determinant of their identities is foregrounded. The contexts in which these terms are used mostly all concern lack of living resources, low pensions, failing health and financial aid.

As stated before, older people are hard-pressed, passive recipients of aid, not actors in command of their lives. They are collectively represented in a sympathetic tone, aggregated as a social category to be helped after having spent more than thirty years of life at work and having earned and deserved their pensions. We do not find overt ageism in these collective names, which may be the result of the legal framework. As Fealy et al. say (2012:85) "Newspaper discourses betray taken-for-granted assumptions and reveal dominant social constructions of ageing and age identity that have consequences for older people's behaviour and for the way that society behaves towards them". Unlike Fealy et al., who find several distinct identity types in which older people are represented ("victims"; "frail, infirm and vulnerable"; "radicalised citizens"; "deserving old" and "undeserving old"), we did not find any collective representations of radicalized or undeserving older people; however, we did find "frail and victims". The older people's social identity is mostly constructed, either by authors or by some participants in their articles, around deserving members of society who are, unfortunately, undeservingly poor, and their economic position in the society is shameful. Nevertheless, the idea that older people could have healthy, full and happy lives does not find its way to printed media. There is little trace of diversity in representations, and homogeneity of the group is presumed. This collective approach and referencing both position older people as a population which is detached from everyday life but which surfaces only, not by their own will, when their economic situation is concerned. Fealy et al. state that (2012:98), "The discursive construction of ageing and age identity revealed a latent ageism in the texts in the way that older people were conferred with a uniform identity of implied dependency". Older people appear in the printed media not because they did something, but because somebody, usually some governmental body, did something for them, that is, gave them some financial support. Constructed as a distinct demographic group connoting poor life, sickness, infirmity and declining capabilities, older people are underrepresented and appear in a limited number of contexts, opposed to "us" who have not reached old age yet and are entitled to much more diverse living conditions. As we said, overt ageism toward older people represented collectively in the Croatian printed media is not created lexically, but it emerges from often dire social circumstances described in articles and from neglect and notably, ignorance by the media. The articles that consist only of stories on penury, diseases, failing bodies and mental capacities inevitably create a pessimistic picture of ageing which is internalized by the audiences, older people including. The upside is that in these articles older people were never represented as burden to society (which is not the case of the articles dealing with the ageing population).

Older women appear as a distinct category within the "older people" collective very rarely. Two extracts (extracts 4, 5) refer to the older women fallen victim of family violence, oppression and social exclusion, one extract (14) deals with low pensions, but

again, older women are represented in rather neutral lexical terms. The context is that of difficult life, of financial dependence and poverty, of poor health, or lack of support, which stop these women from reporting violence. Other than this instance, older women do not appear in other contexts collectively. On the other hand, older men as a distinct collective category have not been mentioned at all, which makes them even more underrepresented. Evidently, there are no older men-specific contexts in which they could participate.

Finally, we covered the discourse of ageing and allegedly oncoming demographic disaster, as the number of older people is constantly increasing and the birth rate is declining, which is often supported by some statistical data to provide some scientific rigor and credibility. In these articles (extracts 11, 12, 13, 26), which are usually reports on this topic or interviews with some experts using academic discourse, we find "starenje" (English: *ageing*) as the key word and where one demographic group is implicitly presented as a problem on account of their age only and as a burden to society. There is no straightforward reason why ageing population is problematic, except what we found in some convoluted hedged statements that ageing may bring great economic and social consequences which have to be dealt with, unless it goes without saying that ageing is bad, being young is good. In fact, older people as persons are suppressed from these articles. The sentences do not have agents, but describe processes which happen independently of some driving forces. The opposition "us/them" surfaces in the shape of alleged concern for the country's future, since there are too many older persons as opposed to those that are still not old.

In answering the first and the second question concerning referential and predication strategies we can say that older people are mostly not presented in a prejudicial manner as we have found few examples which would be overtly ageist. On the other hand, stereotypes underlie examples in which words used in referential and predication strategies collectively representing older people often connote weakness, frailty, helplessness, passivity and poverty, but sometimes it is the context, most commonly built around "umirovljenici" which suggests some of the above states. The forms are usually nouns or adjectives. When referring to individuals, strategies include the age determinant pre- or postmodifying the individual's name, also in some articles where the age determinant is not indispensable, but contributes to the reader's perception of the actor in the article.

As to question 3, we can say that older persons are usually passive recipients of aid or public attention and are very rarely actors, especially in their collective representations. The contexts (question 4) are limited and recurrent, usually economic, demographic, health, living conditions. Finally, to answer question 5 we can say that in some examples age intersects with gender and violence, low income, poverty and homelessness which may be used as grounds for discrimination, but there are only several cases.

In reference to Fairclough's questions (2001:92), we have noticed the following:

1) In response to the question of how the world is presented in the text and what ideological differences can be read, we can say that in these newspaper texts the authors are persons with media power to reach the readership, and are biologically superior insofar as they are younger and able to work, as opposed to older people who no longer have social power and influence. The context in which the terms appear in most cases describes older people in a passive state, accidental victims of neglect, extremely vulnerable and unable to defend themselves, lonely, poor and with reduced mobility. In most articles we found formally similar lexical forms: nouns and nominal phrases ("umirovljenici", "pripadnici treće dobi", "osobe starije od 65 godina", "starija populacija", "žene starije životne dobi", "starije žene", "stariji ljudi", "beskućnik", "starije generacije", "stara i bolesna osoba", "ostarjelo stanovništvo", "domovi za starije osobe", "nesretna starica") and adjectives which express the author's attitude, such as "zaslužena", "nesretna". We found one derogatory noun "gerontokracija", suggesting that there is a powerful group of older people ruling, contrary to the firm attitude that older people are powerless. We also found adjectives and nouns derived from numbers, which are not ideologically neutral since the age is the axis around which the article is constructed, and where the actors are rather active and vivacious, contrary to "what is expected" of people of certain age.

2) In answering question 2 we can say that the relationship between the authors and the readers is such that it assumes that the above forms are acceptable to both parties. However, the readers are not only younger and middle-aged people and those with some social power, but also older people whose self-image can consequently be seriously distorted upon reading since society treats them as powerless and weak. Among these examples we find the euphemistic umbrella term "umirovljenici", but also markedly informal "penzići" and the derogatory "mirogojski mališani"

3) As to question 3, we found some examples of expressive value, such as "starica", connoting powerlessness, immobility and inactivity and also a diminutive "penzići" suggesting weakness and vulnerability.

4) Question 4 has only one example as an answer: "pripadnici treće dobi", "treća dob" being the metaphor for old age, the final stage in life. Though the metaphor is frequently used, has become petrified and has lost some of its figurative meaning, it still connotes finiteness and termination of a life cycle and is one more depressing expression.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this paper we focused on representational, referential and predication strategies used in reference to older persons who were the main topic in the articles to find out whether these strategies were used in stereotypical or prejudicial manner and to establish in which contexts and in which roles older people appear. As a conclusion to this research

we can say that overt ageism as a type of discrimination transmitted via language is not typical of the Croatian printed media, at least in the analysed period. Ageist terms are few, and when present, they are accompanied with some hedging devices to suggest that the authors are aware that these terms might be offensive. We found examples of overt ageism in cases where the authors suggested that people past certain age were not up to their duties. Apparently, legal measures help reduce discrimination, which demonstrates how social practices affect discourse. The articles which described ageist situations in fact asked for compassion and sympathy from readers, and older people were mostly described as the ones to be protected. However, this proved to be a downside of the problem: older people are collectively represented mostly as weak, frail, sick and poor, passive beneficiaries of modest financial aid, some exposed to violence, poverty and dull life in the anticipation of imminent death. All other aspects of life after 65 are missing, which contributes to a gloomy vision of old age in older people and those nearing this age. Older people are conspicuously non-existent from all other topics. These examples show how the media intentionally or unintentionally neglect this segment of the population. To sum up, a better media education could raise awareness of journalists in the first place that older people still have their place in society and that their past achievements, experience as well as present lives could be reported on and read about using discourse that would be free of overt or latent discrimination. Enhancing the presence of older people in the media could show that old age is not reduced to suffering in the expectation of death, and that older persons do not have to be shunned away from active life.

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### **Analyzed newspapers and magazines (printed versions only):**

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Jutarnji list

Večernji list

Nacional

Globus

7Dnevno

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