

---

**Influence of Education, Profession, and Digital Exposure on Urban Women's Perception of Ageing in Islamabad**

**Saqib Ullah**

M.Phil Scholar, International Islamic University Islamabad

**Abstract**

Ageing is a global phenomenon, but when it comes to its perception, it is different, depending on social, educational and technological conditions. This article examines the influences of education, professional interaction and digital exposure on the perception of ageing in the group of literate urban women in Islamabad. The survey involved a cross-sectional study of 120 respondents, where structured questionnaire was administered to evaluate attitude towards ageing, self image and societal expectation. The results indicate that the more the educational level, active involvement in work, and the overall digital interaction, the greater is the perception of women on ageing, the more self-confidence, resilience, and an active approach to health and lifestyle. Limited exposure on the other hand is related to anxiety and negative attitudes to physical and social ageing changes. The research highlights the transformational nature of education and digital literacy in influencing ageing perceptions and propose interventions that can be used to enhance positive ageing discourse amongst urban women. Such findings can be applied in policy, health education, and social interventions that aim at the ageing population.

**Keywords:** Perception of ageing, Urban women, Education impact, Digital exposure, Professional engagement

**Introduction**

Ageing is often an underexplored as well as an undervalued domain within the sociological domain, with a limited number of studies on this topic, around the globe. Sociologically, many social factors including; socioeconomic status, family background, education, geographic context, and social behavior contribute to ageing (Stuart-Hamilton) the research investigates the pivotal role of education and diverse life exposures in shaping women's perceptions of ageing. This stratum is chosen because these women are aligned with maximum opportunities in an urban context and they have more exposure to global trends for active ageing.

At the core of our discourse lies the construct of the subjected self-evaluation of ageing in individuals, which directly impacts women's lives and their well-being (Barrett A. E., 2008). This study aims to fill a critical gap of contextual and conceptual need in the existing literature by focusing on self-reported perceptions of ageing as first-hand subjective responses, where data would be driven from qualitative research about women's own experiences, attitudes and perceptions about their ageing is identified by some studies as knowledge gap (Wettstein, 2024). Assessment of self-reporting perception and influencers can inform the development of age-inclusive policies and social programs, and also add knowledge to sociological literature against ageing and gender. Additionally, they significantly respond to the contextual need of literature, where existing literature overly focuses on women from a Western

country's standpoint. This study is based in Pakistan, where ageing has long been perceived through the eyes of social roles and responsibilities of the family. In Pakistan to our knowledge, we have the opportunity, for the first time to our knowledge, to conduct an extensive study that critically examines the perception of ageing among women through a sociological lens, emphasizing the interplay between their subjective perceptions, practices, and exposure to education, career and digital accessibility with the subsequent impact on individual life trajectories. Understanding these dynamics for educated women in Islamabad will help point out how modernity interplays with tradition to shape women's experiences of ageing in Pakistan. We conceptualized the concept of ageing, as the perceived onset of ageing in this research (Barrett A. E., 2008), where we adopted subjective measures based on individual perceptions of ageing, assumed that individual perceptions of ageing and ageing-related expectations, goals, and actions may differ across individuals, even at the same chronological age (Diehl, 2020) (see e.g. Diehl et al., 2015). Perception of ageing refers to how individuals internally experience and evaluate their ageing process, often differing significantly from their chronological age, where T perception is influenced by the combination of psychological, cultural, and environmental factors. Research highlights that subjective age often has more significant implications for well-being and health outcomes than chronological age (Rothermund, 2021).

#### Perception of Ageing in Women: A Global Shift in Perception from Traditional to Modern Views on Ageing

Demographically; ageing is explained as the continued decline in fertility rates and increased life expectancy. For example, among European nations, where the life expectancies are higher at the age of 65, this onset to old age is associated with later age comparison to those nations with lower life expectancies of life (Augustyński, 2021). World Health Organization has recognized 60 years as the standard onset for defining old age and also projected an increase from 2015 to 2050, the share of the global population aged 60 and older, growing from 12% to 22% (WHO, 2024) While the shift towards an older population—referred to as population ageing—initially began in high-income countries like Japan, where 30% of the population is already over 60, it is now low- and middle-income countries experiencing the most significant demographic change by 2050, two-thirds of the world's population aged 60 and above will reside in these regions (WHO, 2024), making it significant to analyze the shift in attitude, perception and practice of people near to touch their old age bracket according to WHO (60 years), or the contextual definition of ageing, for instance, after 40 in the context of Pakistan. A worldwide Transition from Conventional to Contemporary Perspectives on Ageing (Bordone, 2020). This perception of the onset of old age is frequently changing, historically and demographically amid all the ages in the significant areas of functioning. Substantial issues are encountered by several countries that are striving to prove that their health systems and social structures are prepared to handle these demographic shifts. There are two main folds to understanding the term “Ageing”, biological and demographical; ageing arises from the cumulative accumulation of molecular and cellular damage over time, resulting in a gradual decline in physical and cognitive capacities, secondly the societal and psychological dimension; where the transition of social roles and duties, health behaviour, and other social factors contribute.

The conceptualization of ageing highlights the “perceived onset of old age” as a conceptual framework for understanding subjective ageing (Barrett and von Rohr, 2008). Historically these trends explore that old age perceptions are continuously varying with time. Where the term “old” was used to define the chronological age of an individual among the nations with

high expectancies in life (Augustyński & Jurek, 2021). The subjective nature of ageing is emphasized through psychological understandings of cognitive and emotional backgrounds and structures. Additionally, the challenges that are faced by individuals, greatly influence an individual's personality in combating cognitive dissonance in perceived and chronological age (Weiss, 2012). Within South Asian countries this perception of ageing is ingrained strongly with the societal and familial norms. A few research studies conducted within India and Bangladesh highlighted the fact that with increasing age, there is a growing weightage of family responsibility on women, (Mehmood, 2018) education and urbanization are changing perceptions. For example, urban women in India today take up yoga and other wellness programs and beauty regimes as part of the process of growing older (Kaur, 2020). For instance, in India, there has been widespread detection of rapid growth in the beauty and wellness industry mainly in urban areas, more women are opting for cosmetic treatments and aesthetic services with age (Ehlinger-Martin, 2016). This is proof that this cultural trend reverberates along the South Asian region: where the perception of ageing is not considered as a deterioration period but instead a continuous learning self-improvement and self-care.

Education: As pointed out by Ayalon et al. (2014), education is an indicator of socioeconomic status "which is highly correlated with life course trajectories, including marriage, employment, and parenting" (p. 6). (Ayalon et al., 2014; Kuper & Marmot, 2003; Toothman & Barrett, 2011), as a prominent contributor to an individual's life; Wettstein et al., (2024), where individuals might have a different mental concept of life course and the onset of different developmental steps than individuals with lower education. This guides us that the onset of old age is perceived to be affected by education through better health conditions and increased life expectancies (Crimmins & Zhang, 2019). Adapting powerful literature on the correlation of education and that's influence on perception making and attitude building on ageing, supports us to assume that education has a major bearing on how educated women perceive ageing, where they are more likely to view ageing as being in process rather than an entrenchment of a negative stage of life. The literate women as discussed by Twigg (2013), particularly those residing in urban environments are relatively more active towards global trends related to wellness, physical health, and activities related to anti-ageing, building up their self-perception of ageing. It makes females empowered by the way they relate to ageing, rather than merely just looking good; this is very contrary to those without access to educational facilities (Calasanti & Slevin, 2020).

High-tech flow (explicit flow), has changed the physical phenomenon of ageing into a more cognitive one, which has changed the perception/attitude about the construct of ageing (Jason L. Powell, 2014), which is enhancing their well-being, health, physical fitness, and longevity. Psychological Influence, personality traits: The perception of ageing is not merely a psychological aspect, what an individual bearing with them, but also this psychologically subjective interpretation resulting in improved physical well-being so that bidirectional relationship emphasizes the significance of subjective age in overall ageing experiences (Stephan, Sutin, & Terracciano, 2015). Individual traits as well as social traits, combine to react equally to make an influence. Social psychologists have long recognized, discussed by Barrett, (2005) the impact of social structure on self-conceptions (Gecas, 1982; Gecas & Burke, 1995; Hewitt, 1976; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980). For instance, Stryker (1980) concentrates on role identities, those personal conceptions that one is part of the social structure. Of particular importance in the structural approach to identity are individuals' ongoing social relationships that are located within institutional contexts, such as work or family; examples of role identities include mother, wife, and paid worker (see also

McCall & Simmons, 1996; Thoits, 1991). Educated women might also be more critical of the expectations of society, using their knowledge and resources to redefine what it means to age, perhaps being more consciously engaging with wellness trends and anti-ageing practices (Jakovljevic et al., 2021). Education also correlates with professional exposure, educated women resist the stereotyping of old age but try to seek more personal and professional growth (Fry, et. al., 2009).

Cultural norms and societal expectations (Twigg, 2007) heavily influence women to feel marginalized (Levy, 2002) due to society's bias for standards of productivity related to ageing. Age stereotypes (positive and negative) (Kornadt et al., 2022) force a social and self-impact on subjective ageing, enabling poor self-esteem, and mental well-being, therefore creating postpositive ageing constructs that could improve the quality of self-perception. In the world, attitudes and expectations towards ageing are changing because of more enhanced healthcare facilities, an extended lifespan, and changing demographics (World Health Organization, 2024). Slevin (2010) observes that ageing among women has moved from biology to health, beauty, and accomplishment because of massive changes in the culture. Traditionally, the notion of ageing was recognized through decline, especially in women who have had social construction related to beauty and youth. However, recent studies have shown that somehow the narrative has changed with this perception type as well, mostly in Western countries, where wellness, beauty maintenance, and professional advancement are more and more associated with ageing (Calasanti, 2020). This has been made possible by improvements in the healthcare sector, an increase in the average number of years of life, and the emerging anti-ageing business.

According to Harriss, (2006), "change is by no means uniform and so, many women's perceptions of ageing vary depending on access to resources and social networks". Urbanization and residing in towns provide women with easy access to health care, exercise, and contemporary processes of beauty, thereby making them view ageing positively and engage with the ageing process more actively through diet, exercising, and beauty treatments in the case of urban women (Abdullah et al., 2021). The educated women of the urban sector are presented with the idea of better career prospects and access to fitness programs and health care to keep their body fit and mentally young with age; on the other hand, she is pressed between professional success, family responsibilities, and self-care throughout life, which can have a connection with how they experience ageing (Jakovljevic et al., 2021). They think the vast majority of the fashionable world surrounding the physique, diet, and routines of cosmeceuticals is a feature of the ageing process (Gilleard & Higgs, 2014). The industry also holds a very significant position among those that are shaping the perceptions of literate women about ageing. The existence of such products and services especially in the cities has popularized an anti-ageing discourse, effectively placing ageing within a need to be controlled or managed (Twigg, 2013). Such women are more likely to embrace other global beauty standards such as cosmetic treatments as well as fitness Programs for ageing.

In the case of the global wellness trends, the anti-ageing industry has mirrored such redefined perceptions. The products of beauty, fitness, and wellness have ensured that this phase of life is not synonymous with 'read my lips', it is an investment in health, beauty and self-care (Gilleard, 2014). The change in the trend is not only limited to Western societies but continues to be a global power through media and cultural exchange. The notion of Active Ageing which is concerned with capability, physical fitness, and social participation opens new avenues for women to sustain youthful energy during old age (Jakovljevic, 2020).

An explanation of why women should be incorporated is given by arguing the fact that the existing literature shows a drastic imbalance, with an emphasis on gender, while examining theoretical links between critical life transitions and perceived age. For instance, investigations show that women are more likely to adopt young age images than men (Barrett A. E., 2005). This means that gender is a useful lens through which to investigate the complexity of subjective age processes. Anne found that individuals carry a definition of the concept of ageing individually, and they perceive ageing according to their perceived meaning of ageing (Barrett A. E., 2008). Moreover, there are gender differences in the leisure activities and voluntary work performed by older people; i.e., older women are caregivers regardless of whether they live in rural or urban areas. Moreover, these older caregivers demand more programs based on family needs assessment and family careers (Agulló-Tomás, 2019) and (Chien, 2006). In particular, some examples of programs demanded by rural women who care for older people are leisure programs independent of the living environment (Agulló-Tomás, 2019) and (Tomás, 2018)] and programs for reducing loneliness and isolation in a rural environment (Blusi, Asplund, & Jong, 2013). (Zorrilla-Muñoz et al., 2022) Above all, gender disparities exist, and despite women's longer life expectancy, the strain and continuity of family care responsibilities remain high for the female population at this period of life ( $\leq 50$ ). Other reasons or factors are that the continuity of gendered roles subsequently affects the middle-aged and older women with perceived health and quality of life thus leaving them feeling unimportant, and dissatisfied with hobbies and volunteer work (Zorrilla-Muñoz et al., 2022).

Slevec's and Tiggeman's claim that its three types of sociocultural influences—that is, the family, peers, and media literature—represent the primary agents of reinforcement and transmission of standards of beauty for women is attributable to sociocultural theory (Thompson et al., 1999). In theory, the mass media motivates women to invest in their appearance by mapping thinness, health and beauty with a list of affective and interpersonal benefits such as happiness, status, and preference (Tiggemann, 2005). Various research indicates that middle-aged women especially those with high body image concerns are likely to indulge in eating disorders and body dissatisfaction (Katz, 2005; McCabe, Ricciardelli, & James, 2007; McLean, Paxton & Wertheim, 2009), Slevec & Tiggemann, 2011. Educational attainment and digital communication also play a part, revealing that elderly individuals, taking part in digital communications with others, have a younger subjective age. According to the survey conducted by the German ageing survey, there is an increased trend of internet usage for social and economic reasons, which speaks of the role of technology in changing people's perception of ageing. Consequently, educated, urban women in Islamabad should be targeted because education and urbanization provide women with enhanced access to world views and the World Wide Web. The educated female is likely to be more interested in modern trends related to wellness issues and more challenged in terms of old discourses about ageing (Jakovljevic et al., 2021). Rather, as far as employment status is concerned, working women are generally assumed to be in better health than women who do not work outside the home (Nathanson, 1975, Nathanson, 1980, Verbrugge, 1983, Waldron & Jacobs, 1988, Annandale & Hunt, 2000). The improved health of working women is not just a result of the "healthy worker effect," as certain research has usually verified (Passannante & Nathanson, 1985; Waldron & Jacobs, 1988; Arber, 1997). The workplace can provide experiences that improve life happiness, social support for otherwise lonely people, and chances to develop self-confidence and self-esteem in one's decision-making (Sorensen &

Verbrugge, 1987). Also, earning enables women to financially support themselves and the family and also increases women's power in the family (Artazcoz et al., 2003).

#### The Complex Dynamics of Ageing within the Pakistani Urban Context

Urbanization has also changed lifestyles and health consciousness in Pakistan, which moves at a rapid pace to being modernized, the literate women in cities stay in the lead, navigating changes and meeting expectations of yesteryear with new opportunities (Abdullah et al., 2021). There is hardly any research done on ageing, especially on females in Pakistan. Whatever research has been conducted is majorly on aged populations or the rural population, ignoring the literate, urban female experience. Research in many instances has shown that rural women have a relatively more traditional notion of ageing and most often identify with disengagement from social life and public life (Harriss, 2004). The women from Islamabad are exposed to international stories of fitness, anti-ageing, and wellness; thus, it can divert them towards the side that does not hold personal views on ageing. In Pakistan, the influence of international beauty practices is, in general, found and this is particularly viewed in the higher education women living in Islamabad (Zafar & Khan, 2020). The urban environment liberates professional and personal freedom that involves the woman becoming more active as well as individualistic in her approach towards ageing (Harriss, 2004). By and large, less has been given to the lives of literate urban women, likely more autonomous and aware of global wellness narratives. In this respect, further studies must be carried out on literate Pakistani women to understand how education, modernity and urbanization influence ageing perceptions. This study focuses on individuals conventionally considered old by traditional definitions, with particular attention to Asia and Pakistan.

#### Triangulating Perception of Ageing: Tools and Methodology

We employ qualitative research design to acquire in-depth rich data on the perception of subjective age among respondents, the rationale for selecting qualitative research is to explore the perceptions of ageing, where justifiably qualitative design offers such formative and explorative nature of data. Grounded in the interpretive-constructivist paradigm, this research utilizes Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) to analyze how women's interactions with societal narratives shape their perceptions of ageing, combined with the framework of Intersectionality, rooted in Critical Feminist Perspectives (Crenshaw, 1989), to examine how overlapping identities—such as educational attainment with professional and digital exposure—intersect with gender to construct nuanced perceptions of ageing. This Dual approach provided us with a theoretical framework to better gauge the chemistry of complex relationships between individual agencies with structural and cultural influences that determine the ageing perception. This dual-theoretical method also offers a lens to view the idea of this study from conception to execution. Methods of data collection consist of purposive sampling and extended five in-depth interviews with the key informants, and one detailed case study of women aged 35-50, residing in Islamabad (Urban), with master's or more educational attainment, currently married, professional, from the upper middle class.

#### SR Title Organization Age Group

Respondents#1	Associate Professor	Islamic International University, Islamabad, Pakistan	45-50
Respondents#2	Senior Data Analyst	Cooperate, Telecom industry, MNC	35-40
Respondents#3	Senior School Teacher	Semi-Private School and Collages, Islamabad	45-50
Respondents#4	School Teacher	Private School, Islamabad	35-40

Respondents#5 Assistant Professor Islamic International University, Islamabad, Pakistan 39-40

Case Study Associate Professor XXXXX 40-45

The discussion guide was developed by the authors, all questions were based on a literature review, as well as a theoretical understanding of the Pakistani context, to gauge the depth of understanding of respondents' perception (Scharff, 2013). Open-ended questions focused on exploring the details, which were unwrapped yet in the unique context of Pakistan, where society is still in a transitional phase, from traditional to modern. All key themes of the questions; contribute to getting a better understanding of the subjective perception of middle-aged working literate urbanite women related to their chronological age and age they perceive, and how their education and exposure; including organizational exposure, digital exposure (while they are residing urban setups), interplay and contribute in development of their perception of ageing in the context of Pakistan.

What is the perception of middle-aged literate, working women regarding their ageing in Pakistan, and how do they see their chronological age and subjective age?

What are some key contributing factors; including their education and exposure to their career, organizational, digital and while living in an urban area?

What is the interplay of traditional cultural vs modern values and beliefs in shaping women's perceptions of ageing?

The authors themselves are directly involved in the data collection process, careful attention was paid to ethical considerations at all stages of the interviews, including privacy and confidentiality of respondents' identity, as well as to ensure linguistic accuracy and accessibility, the interviews were carried out in the local language of the respondents. All interviews were recorded using an MP3 Sony recording device, if permission from respondents was granted, otherwise, an active notes-taking technique was used to record the responses. After the completion of all interviews, all interviews were transcribed into English language, in MS Word. Subsequently, the research team proceeded with the coding process, employing thematic data analysis to examine the data.

#### Interviews

Our data direct the research toward evolving but complex perceptions of aging among women of the upper middle class, with significant educational attainment and exposure to career and digital access. Data highlighted a shift of perception from chronological years of life to more complex and interconnected personal, societal, and cultural, as well as new determinants of modernization and urbanization on shaping the perception of ageing, particularly on women. Where the idea of old age was tightly associated with declination in traditional fashion, the modern perspective offers an active ageing, where attention is to maintaining fitness, and appearance, as well as playing an active role in society. Findings also elaborate on the sociological aspect of ageing, where ageing is considered a social construct in modern society, with active and collective interplay between individual agency, and geographical, social and cultural context.

#### 1. Theme: Ageing Perception Evolve from Traditional to Modern: A Shift in Paradigm

Literature indicates that ageing in Pakistan is primarily considered as later-life challenges and issues related to care. Our data find that ageing is no longer associated with traditional notions of ageing, perceived as a problem and challenge, but also opening new opportunities. Data reflect a matured notion toward ageing, where some participants discuss how they have become more comfortable with ageing as they grow older. The respondent identifies a dual experience of ageing: physical changes (e.g., tiredness, back pain) and the psychological

feeling of ageing (feel of ageing). We can categorize two dimensions of perception; positive ageing versus negative ageing, and what respondents perceive with ageing shaped by their personal experiences.

Contextual consideration of ageing is one of the major themes, our data observed, where respondents highlighted the fact that their self-perception of age is not similar to other folks' perception of their age, based on social construction meaning of ageing, depending on how a woman looks, her lifestyle and dressing. For example, one of the respondents was 39 years old, though people thought she was younger than she was. Likewise, political leaders such as Maryam Nawaz (Current Chief Minister of Punjab, Pakistan) and social celebrities, also trigger differently see the ageing standards.

We observe the perception from traditional fashion, where women accepted their ageing, and transformed their appearance and behaviour, which was aligned with their age. Modern women accept ageing as a process of life but redefine it with self-care for active ageing. Here we observe two types of notations; positive by modern women, with pro-activeness and readiness, while negative ageing is perceived by traditional including physical decline, social exclusion and treatment from society as old. Our respondents acknowledge ageing as a "beautiful process," with personal and intellectual development in women. We can assess this evolved idea that arguing is no more a physical or chronological advancement but also a holistic development of women.

A chronological number of years is ageing, which is not only physical but both physical and psychological, you feel tired. I never feel this tiredness after my office, and my travel to the office. So my energy is going down, backache is another sign. Physical ageing is another thing, but with tiredness, internally you feel that you are ageing now. So there are two factors; Physical changes and the feeling of aging. (Corporate Manager)

Ageing is out of fashion, and undesirable these days. We saw our parents and our relatives, they were old, physically and psychologically, they accepted that and started behaving like old, getting dressed in that way. Ageing is a fact, it's a beautiful process, and you cannot stop it. (Senior School Teacher)

The subjectivity of ageing was fluid across respondents, they were not clear fix any spacing age chronological number to label it as aged or old, however, after a sequence of prompt questions, respondents hypothetically grouped age after 40 to 50, where you feel starting of ageing, however, it was strongly a matter of relevance, where they also argued that people in 30's also feel old, if they don't manage to deal with the ageing process, with active lifestyle, diet and other strategies to feel and look young. In the context of the traditional context of Pakistan, women crossed their 40s were considered as aged, while our data indicate an interesting aspect that, in modernized and urbanized Pakistan the concept is shifting, respondents mentioned many cases of their surroundings, where women over 40 are still single and looking for right matches for themselves, and it's considered as new normal.

"Now, 40 years is considered young. People are getting married in their 40s. It's all about how you present yourself." (Associate Professor)

I cannot recognize any fixed age group, because it varies from person to person, for many people feel young, while they are 40 and 45, like my mother, at her age she is not so tired, as I am. One reason could be the diet, way of life, and activities. Yes, not of physical appearance, but for being active in life, our older generation was more active. After 30 years of age, you start declining and after 50, you are now old. After 30 years of age, you start feeling ageing. (Corporate Manager)



Now the idea of ageing is shifting forward, in old times, when a woman crossed 40, she was considered old, but now you see 40 is a young age, people are getting married in their 40's. We cannot label a woman over 40 as an old woman. But all about the way she is presenting herself, if she is presenting herself as young, she is young, if she is presenting herself as old, we also perceive her as an old woman. And now these days' women are presenting themselves as young. (Senior Private School Teacher)

While assessing the motivation to maintain a youthful appearance explored two folds; external and internal motivations; where explicit factors such as professional requirements or societal standards act as strong motivators. Implicit factors of individual motivation for combat ageing is a complex phenomenon, the desire to feel physically fit, maintain health, or engage with a younger social circle drives them to invest in fitness, skincare, and other anti-ageing practices, such as exercising, eating healthily, and using skin treatments—is not just about appearance but is also a strategy for ensuring well-being in later years.

## 2. Theme: Education in Reshaping Ageing Perceptions in Pakistan

Education was identified as a major feature that altered perceptions of ageing described in traditional societies of Pakistan. Respondents linked education to increased knowledge on issues to do with physical health, fitness, and healthy living which made women across ages present themselves as youthful and fully charged. Our findings recognized that better educational attainment effectively influences an individual's worldview for ageing, education also enables women to manage their health, specifically related to ageing as a coping strategy. The narratives suggest that education provides a dual framework for navigating ageing: it prepares women for employment and for handling stress and pressures, but it also socializes women to accept particular ways of dressing, being and acting. Education collectively has a positive impact on ageing perception, however, respondents also mentioned gender expectations at the workplace; to appear more youthful, active and good presentation, where education stands alone, fails to facilitate one's perception.

As, if I see my life, my life at the age of twenty was full of happiness, full of positivity but when I entered my practical life, there were lots of ups and downs in my life like every normal individual, based on personal experiences, based on job experiences, based on relationship experiences, based on the parent-child experiences, and particularly when you become a parent and based on your financial experiences, colleague experiences, partner experiences... so it's sometimes positive, negative and sometimes neutral but again it depends upon the personal experiences of your life. (Lecturer)

## 3. Theme: Influence of Social and Cultural Context on Perception Shaping on Ageing

To assess the influence of social and cultural factors; we can have categorized two main aspects; where some respondents associate ageing that affecting their social interactions and self-esteem, and they feel irrelevant to contribute their opinions, due to their age. The same psychological tool is observed in different societal settings, in family, and professional settings, where women perceive that their value is tied to their youthfulness. The other aspect; where women recognize ageing, brings wisdom and more self-awareness. Likewise, respondents also mentioned that external societal pressure and the workplace environment, lead women to engage in ageing management practice. Here, we see the internal individual scholar with ageing reflected in their social interaction, where perception is two-way traffic, internal factors of individuals shape their behaviour, and similarly, external societal factors influence individual self-value. An interesting feature was identified when some respondents felt young, at their workplace surrounded by young and active people, this social circle, made

them realize being associated with the same group, while the same respondents pointed out the feeling of being aged at their home, where they felt distanced and treated aged, with a young family member. This unique aspect of the finding indicates the liquid nature of the ageing concept, with the influence of psychological and social factors interplaying interestingly.

Nobody wants to be old, but a person while getting old, yes will feel it. Yes, she will not be happy that she is getting old, but with wisdom, and intellectual growth, she will have more experiences of life. People start valuing your suggestions and advice, everything has good and bad within it. (Cooperate Manager)

It's a beautiful process. I enjoy my ageing; maybe other women also enjoy it. (Private School Teacher)

I would say that it's a human instinct that an individual never admits or feels himself growing up or becoming mature. He never wants to look older or feel older or one may pass through middle age. (Lecturer)

As the respondents were from the upper middle class and also engaged with some social circle, they emphasized the importance of such social gatherings, for instance, Kitty parties become critical in the social calendar of urban women for them to keep enjoying being young. These meetings give not only motivation and inspiration but also some feeling of accountability, as the attendees try to dress fit and physically active. This demonstrates how group dynamics and group culture corroborate ageing practices that are healthy for society. Moreover, social relations at the workplace predicted the perception of ageing to a greater extent. Those respondents who worked with younger co-workers wanted to follow their example and remained active, which was reflected in their working process and behaviour. It helps create a common purpose and a bond which eradicates different generation gaps. This also influences dietary awareness, habits and other healthy lifestyles including exercise. As women belong to an active group of women in society, surrounded by young women, coworkers, and working as professionals, they highlighted the influence of cultural expectations on their decisions about fitness, appearance, and ageing. Respondents also reported the self-care activities that inspire them and convinced them to adopt similar practices (e.g., going to the gym, using beauty products) adopted by their peers or colleagues and adopting similar practices (e.g., going to the gym, using beauty products) to stay aligned with societal expectations.

As we observed that respondents pointed out the social construct of ageing perception, data also advocated that some symbols such as grey hair, traditional attire and neutral tone of dress colour, wrinkled skin and obesity which are prominent effects of menopause, are some symbols of ageing in women of middle age in the context of Pakistan. Consequently, when accessibility and affordability are facilitating women from the upper and upper middle class, they opt for aesthetic maintenance, such as yoga, gym routines, and cosmetic surgeries. We see this socio-economic factor in the case of having a healthy diet. Here, only education or awareness of good and healthy lifestyles is not a sufficient influencer, but their capacity to adopt healthy lifestyles is predominantly associated with higher socio-economic classes. The idea that cosmetic interventions are symbolic of socio-economic prestige, the examples used include Maryam Nawaz (Current Chief Minister, Punjab, Pakistan) and Madam Noor Jahan (Late famous Pakistani Singer), where these interventions also subvert conventional ideas of ageing while sustaining classism by making such practice available according to a person's class. These symbols often lead to stigmatization or marginalization, especially for women

who deviate from societal norms, how symbolic cues reinforce societal expectations about ageing, pressuring women to conform to youthful appearances:

“I stopped dying my hair. People started commenting that I looked older and needed to take care of myself.” (Senior Private Teacher)

#### 4. Theme: Contracts and Comparisons while Perceiving Ageing

The data pointed out some comparisons and contracts, made by respondents, while perceiving ageing they usually compare their ageing with some other women of the same age; data suggested some parameters they use, including comparison of generation, rural and urban context, socio-economic class differences and gendered. Respondents actively compare two generations while explaining their perception; they compare themselves with either their mother, elder sisters or cousin sisters with a significant age gap; of 20-30 years of age gap. Explaining their perception, respondents actively compare two generations, respondents make a comparison with their women, elder sisters, or cousin sisters, and there is a significant age difference within the comparison; 20-30 years. Respondents together with it concurred that such opportunities and resources had been scarce during the older generations' time, thus resulting in an enormous gap between how ageing was perceived and encountered. Modern medical therapy and freights of self-care products have made the face age of contemporary women invisible, or at least delayed so that worries over the ineffectiveness of the ageing system are as rife today.

Yoga and Gym are mostly opted by the household women, of the higher class to keep themselves busy and smart which is their I guess requirement to stay updated. (Senior Private Teacher)

Gym and other treatments require money, if you are earning well, and you are conscious of your ageing, you will prioritize yourself, and you will spend, but it depends on your earnings. If you are living far away from the gym and other facilities, you need to walk in the morning and evening, and you can afford drivers and a maid at home, these all factors support you in dealing with Ageing (Cooperate Manager)

As for my perception now, some people go to gyms and such, but if you consider the circumstances, things are more accessible in modern cities. Facilities are available to people who have the means. However, the issue here isn't just about accessibility; it's also about approach and priorities (Lecturer)

Compared to urban women in Islamabad, rural women are considered occupied with labor work, while ageing is differently felt and appreciated; With better resources, education and exposure to the wellness trends, residing in well-off urban areas, women look younger and take better care of themselves enjoying the health facility something like fitness routine and beauty treatments. The data also presents a marked disparity between societal expectations and gender sensitivity towards ageing where ageing in men is revered as a representation of wisdom and ageing in women is a sign of exclusion and societal pressure to remain youthful. This supports such gender stereotypes, where women are expected to have good physical looks and beautiful, healthy looks. It echoes the culture of patriarchy where the worth of women is seen to be most dependent on their appearance. We observed gender as a marker of how ageing is navigated in the context of Pakistan. This gender-influenced phenomenon is observable in workplaces, where a woman is put under pressure to produce their look as well as physical strength. Despite these pressures, respondents began discursively constructing the terms of an active lifestyle and the value of taking care of the self.

#### 5. Theme: The Role of Professional Exposure in Shaping Ageing Perception

Our data loudly speak about the alteration of ageing perception; at home and workplace, as women experience ageing differently. We also discussed how the professional environment expects women to remain presentable, which serves as a motivator for active ageing. Likewise, routine interaction with youthful colleagues at work also serves as a motivator, as this fosters intergenerational interactions with young women from the same socio-economic class, influences their approach to ageing, and motivates them to stay fit. Here we assess a unique dimension of professional exposure, where this collaborative dynamic between middle-aged women and young women is bridging age gaps, sharing identity and challenging the traditional beliefs of ageing to be historically marginalized. Interestingly, women with mid-level education as well as entry-level roles, bear more pressure of presentable appearance, as compared to senior staff. Here we can analyze the discrepancy between personal identity, achievement and social expectations, where ageing is experienced differently based on education, social and professional career hierarchy. Respondents described how people conform to organizational culture norms regulating physical appearance and conduct. As was pointed out earlier, there are several references to how image helps in increasing confidence in the workplace and a feeling of professional capability. Women are required to look young to be considered serious or even considered for promotion to higher positions.

Routine to go to work also serves as an influencer, where the respondent touches on how work serves as a motivating factor in maintaining youthful energy. Respondents identified the daily routine of going out from home, for work and getting ready including the practices that also align with self-care and age management. On the other hand, when they experience any break in this routine for example during vacation, they perceive themselves as inactive, and less motivated for self-care. Our data revealed a strong correlation between professional activeness and engagement with the perception of ageing. This feeds into what this paper has previously pointed out to be the roles that societal expectations and performance of routine group activities have on ageing, knowledge acquired about workplace culture and its effects on ageing as well as noted by the respondents, where the participants talked about how corporate culture expected of women and how it affected their ageing process.

I am working in a corporate office, where looks matter a lot, concerning age as well. If I talk about my office, many people are working there, many women, and people talking behind them, she is not looking appropriately, she remains so simple, (in a bad way) that people start talking about them, and their looks, it's a negative thing. It is desirable to a corporate office that women should be mode scouts, and that is also important because looks boost their confidence. (Corporate Manager)

#### 6. Theme: Digital Exposure of Women and Their Perception of Ageing

Respondents describing technology's effects on ageing perception frequently reported the words, "internet" and "social media". Likewise, mobile phone connectivity, internet browsing and content from social media are mentioned as digital tools for gathering information and inspiring. Respondents from this research mentioned that they use these platforms to get ideas on how to look young or remain young, not simply for connectivity and social interaction only. Our research highlights the strong reliance on the internet and digital tools as a source of information, specifically to keep them updated with new health information related to ageing; such as a clean diet, exercise, and beauty treatments. Our research in this way, also explored the emerging trend of self-learning and self-motivating with inspiration among women, while evaluating the information on the internet. Respondents also mentioned that they learned about some Pakistani celebrities on the internet, who are well-managed in their

age with a youthful appearance, these celebrities inspire women, some participants raised the point that such information may not be equal for all and internet is useful and those who are aware of ageing with solutions for fitness, good nutrition, and skin. This is a move from the formal, authoritative sources of information sharing such as physicians towards sharing knowledge based on one's own experience and/or together with other like-minded people. Several respondents noted the emergence of what we might call a "reserve strategy," in which age serves as the basis for exclusion, especially in digital/social spaces. Thus, on the one hand, it can be pointed out that a certain number of women intended to claim the need for skill and knowledge updates and, as such, revealed their ability to respond to new challenges.

Well, the best source to know about a good diet is the internet. As of right now what we were discussing, everything is available on the net about what to eat or not, and what is good for your skin. (Corporate Manager)

I learn new digital technologies that are my strategy to align with my other young fellows, if I am outdated, and not aware of digital supplies I will be considered old, and will be out from my group, I am consciously and intentionally aware of myself, with new technology idea, mac book, iPhone, smartwatch, new apps. I spend most of my time online, as my children are grown up, I have fewer responsibilities, so I engaged busy myself online, searching health and fitness, because, at my age, I am most conscious of health and fitness, how to preserve myself from disease, how to maintain good health, what to eat. All new information, we never knew before, we learn from the internet. (senior Private School Teacher)

#### Case Study:

This case study aims to supplement the qualitative data and more specifically, an attempt to explore the evolving perceptions of ageing, with depth understanding. This case study focuses on the life experiences and subjected self-actualization of a female university professor, with high attainment in education as well as, posits the professional exposure with national and international universities. She assigned her valuable time to this study and responded with a detailed explanation of any perception she held. The life of the Professor is selected as the case because of her ideal suitability with the sample criteria of this research as well as her pro-activeness and orientation toward a healthy, youthful life in middle age.

#### 1. Generational and Cultural Disparities in Lifestyle and Health Practices

As our qualitative interviews already discovered the influence of education on the perception of ageing, also offered unique notions of the interplay of other factors with education to shape the perception of ageing. In our case study, the Professor explained in detail that the professor and her sisters were all highly qualified, but still, their perceptions and attitudes toward ageing were vastly different. Here the heart of the argumentation that makes a difference is the generational gap. This age gap which is more than 20 years, supports the argument that social and cultural context are equally important in shaping any perception. Professor mentioned the traditional characteristics of the socio-cultural environment where her sisters came from, a completely different one characterized by early marriage, early childbearing and traditional female gender roles. Female characters of their age were ill-constructed by cultural standards which did not allow them to indulge in activities such as exercising in a traditional environment, as well as the lack of consciousness of what they ate and how they looked, and the medical facilities that were available to them discriminated against men.

Here we also noticed the comparison of the professor's story with the stories of her sisters, who are also university graduates but of varying internationalization. This work explores how

education and travelling reconfigure the ideas of ageing, self-care, and power. On the other hand, the professor's perception was influenced by her higher education, but also her international exposure to career and digital accessibility offered her better accessibility to health-related information and lifestyle. Here the interesting aspect also noted; while comparing with her sister, the professor was more conscious about her diet, regular exercise and holistic health management, providing us an opportunity to understand how women develop and modify their perceptions, while using comparative modelling in her life. Here in the case of the professor, she was using generational gap modelling, to define the evolution in perception. She presented the contrast, of difference of perception and practice with a generational gap, and also with a contrast of the relative of her same age, but with traditional perception and attitude toward ageing, where she reported that international exposure and effective use of digital access for fitness and health positively affect her thoughts about ageing, which was absent in her relative women case. She raised the question of health and youth self-image in the traditional setup; "A woman who never took a healthy diet, and she is now experiencing back pain, how can she define herself as young?"

## 2. The Impact of Education and International Exposure

The professor said that the exposure to education and international practices has been pivotal in shaping her evolving knowledge hub on ageing. Her international exposure exposed her to alternative perspectives on health and ageing, stressing more about physical fitness and quality of life. Looking at Western civilized societies, Prof notes that exercising has become a norm for women most especially throughout their post-high school education exercise regimes such as running, yoga and even lifting weights have become part of regular female schedules, these were some new openings for her, such practices that were never imparted to her sisters played a crucial role of changing the nature of the professor when it comes to health and ageing. She also credited education for enabling her to think bigger and beyond her traditional thoughts, and including more included toward scientific observations on ageing.

Along with education, exposure to digital information was also identified as an important aspect by the professor, she mentioned many published scientific research, to support her arguments. She claimed that internet connectivity and digital social interaction at a global level through the internet, make her able to be aware and aligned with current health and fitness trends. She also mentioned her practices of using the internet to explore health and fitness, also about appearances, and modern attire.

## 3. Economic Empowerment influence on the perception of Ageing

The professor related her economic control to her ability to line up her priorities for active ageing. At the same time, she posits that the privilege to avail of this economic empowerment is not equally available to all women in Pakistan. She strongly believed that socio-economic classes also define the markers of ageing, where average traditional women cannot access a healthy diet, information on health, and autonomy to enjoy fitness management activities. She also mentioned the lain faction of career and job orientation, where she believed that workplaces and office time also served as a liberty time for many working women, where they can skip from their traditional and burdened home environment and celebrate their own time. She supported her argument with the example of the lockdown during COVID-19, where the relationship between a woman and her family was shaken badly, as they all felt confined in one place.

## 4. Evolving Marital Norms in Pakistan

This case study also offers an opportunity to understand the evolution of norms, not only in the thinking process of women, but many cultural structures are also evolving, and setting new cultural trends. The case study also touches upon the evolving social norms surrounding marriage and education in Pakistan. The role of marriage and education in Pakistan's changing societal culture is also mentioned in the case study. Back then, it was taken for granted that women were to get married and procreate between the ages of 18 and 20 years. However, the professor informs us of a marked change in present-day Pakistan. Since more women are giving importance to finishing their education and getting a good job, they are also getting married later. The change, she says, is brought about by education and social factors where most women are in their late 20s or early 30s to be married while others decide never to be married until when they have established themselves in their careers or businesses. The change in marriage patterns, says the professor, is characteristic of other shifts in gender perceptions and female liberation. Today's women delay marriage to pay more attention to education and career, changes that redefine what is acceptable in terms of ageing.

##### 5. Menopause and Psychological Dimensions of Ageing

Another very evident concept in the case study is the biological and physical concept of ageing with menopause. She presented the real-life situation of her sisters, as they belong to typical traditional settings of society and also they lack knowledge on menopause, furthermore, some cultural beliefs could not appreciate the physiological changes that accompany ageing. The previous women's generation used superstitions and traditional ways of handling physical change like using amulets or charms (taweez) to combat the physical changes of the body with ageing. However, the professor, who was highly educated and had international exposure, has learned that ageing is a physiological process that can be treated and controlled by observing first-rate healthy habits. According to her claim; hormonal changes during the menopausal period make some women develop depression, weight gain and some other complications physically and psychologically. She emphasized that physical activity, especially weight training during menopause, can help to reduce such symptoms and improve mental health.

Women's biology is different from men's. Women have a strong sense of loss, which is linked with menopause, and they face hormonal imbalance, the reason for depression in women, and that depression leads them to eat more, and eat more obese, which creates more depression. In men, depression is psychological and social but in women, depression is biological. (Professor, Case Study)

So this case study depicts a clear example regarding the effect of education, travelling and economic independence on the perception towards ageing self-care in women residing in Pakistan. How education and travel overall have further developed this more active rather than passive approach to ageing is well illustrated by the professor's example. Finally, this case study shows the changes in cultural and educational endowment, as well as economic independence for women liberating them to engender new conceptions of ageing and undermining the traditional health belief system to embrace the concept of self-health ontology. Hence, it can be considered as a testimony to the model of education and exposure for women's health especially in the Pakistani scenario where feminized health standards and female constraints of the society have always kept women overpowered over their physical and health decision-making profile.

The Subjective Interpretation of Ageing among Women: Theory in the Context of Pakistan

According to Bordone et al. (2019), subjective measures based on individual perceptions of old age and ageing, such as those we examine in this paper (e.g. Barak and Gould, 1985),

become fundamental in the reframing of old age in this way. They describe a more personal point of view on ageing that incorporates an individual's psychological sense of ageing within the immediate socio-cultural context (Westerhof and Wurm, 2015). The subjective understanding of ageing is consequently based on the interplay between education, urbanization, and digital exposure in shaping ageing perceptions in Pakistan (Twigg, 2007; Weiss & Lang, 2012; Stephan, Sutin, & Terracciano, 2015). The analysis of this study has revealed that subjective age correlates with changes in general, health, cognitive, function and mental health and well-being and that these may vary with daily life. The importance of subjective ageing is further supported by findings showing that such measures affect later health and mortality controlling for one's age, previous health and behavior. Since there is a scarcity of such perceptions' empirical research on active ageing, it is possible to hypothesize their effect by taking into account the Risks of the Ageism Model (Swift, 2017), indicating that it is attitudes towards age that define the parameters of active ageing most of all. Ageing, thus, is not only an individual phenomenon, but it also has a strong link to the existing stereotyped views concerning the beauty, usefulness and role of women in society.

Analyzing the concept of ageing with geographical considerations; the perception of ageing is heavily determined by cultural norms and family values in typical South Asian society. A few research studies conducted within India and Bangladesh highlighted the fact that with increasing age, there is a growing weightage of family responsibility on women, (Mehmood, 2018) education and urbanization are changing perceptions. For example, urban women in India today take up yoga and other wellness programs and beauty regimes as part of the process of growing older (Kaur, 2020). For instance, in India, there has been widespread detection of rapid growth in the beauty and wellness industry mainly in urban areas, more women are opting for cosmetic treatments and aesthetic services with age (Ehlinger-Martin, 2016)). This study also supports the argument about the South Asian region, that ageing is now perceived as a continuation of active ageing with effective dealing of ageing, not merely a phase of life directed toward deterioration.

A critical review of this study with the lens of feminist theories explored the societal expectations regarding ageing usually have more pressure on women to be attractive and perform accordingly by staying in the traditional roles by feminist scholars (Calasanti & Slevin, 2020). More likely to fight for this, educated women residing in cities would redefine "ageing," and instead of continuing with set roles, they would embrace professional and personal autonomy (Fry, et. al., 2009).

According to Crenshaw (1991), feminist intersectionality shows how different social markers including gender, class, and culture, co-construct ageing. Since women, especially in cultures that uphold traditional gender roles, pressure themselves to maintain youthful appearances, this is key as many feminist scholars have pointed out sustaining patriarchy (Calasanti & Slevin, 2020). Today, educated women in urban settings reject such expectations of ageing and instead demand personal and career freedom instead of the sterile roles assigned to aged women that were seen by Fry and colleagues (2009). This critique shares feminist ideas about the oppressive focus of ageist culture's expectations of women.

Information availability via the internet comes out as a liberalizing factor in getting rid of diseases and losing weight among middle-aged women. The participants underlined the importance of new technologies in providing information on diets, fitness, and skin protection, so women could make the right choice. This resonance is not surprising, as the existing research indicates that technology plays a key part in self-empowerment and active ageing models pointed out by Jakovljevic et al. (2020). This study, conducted in Pakistan,



highlighted that ageing conceptions depend upon education, residency in urban areas and exposure to digital media (Twigg, 2007; Weiss & Lang, 2012). Based on primary data collected in this research from urban Pakistani women the findings indicate that women who have higher education and more exposure to global media are more likely to have Acceptance of Ageing As an Active Positive Process. These women describe performing fitness exercises, applying lotion, and getting plastic surgeries, activities and processes that problematize the phenomenology of ageing (Stephan et al., 2015). Socio-cultural factors determine the psychological view of ageing. That is why mainstream knowledge, with the help of Westerhof & Wurm (2015), emphasizes that ageing is also determined by subjective reflections on aesthetics, value, and usefulness in society.

In addition, investigations concerning the relationship between social self-perceived age and health status have been carried out. According to Stephan, & Sulz, (2015) it is revealed that age self-stereotyping affects cognitive and mental health, and physical health. Population evidence derived from these studies supports the premise that ageing cannot solely be regarded as a biological phenomenon but a process that is influenced by cumulative societal and individual acculturations. The Risks of Ageism Model (Swift, 2017) demonstrates the overall existence of important attitude perception towards ageing proposing perceived attitudes as major activators of active ageing. In patriarchal societies, women are pressured to look young; in the process, and this pushes women out of both workplaces and public domains (Mehmood, 2018). Nevertheless, embodied using personal narratives, the above feminist theories also establish education and urbanization as other factors that transform these types of experiences. Modern educated women in urban setups can embrace ageing as a glamorous event where their uselessness is not equated to ageing as projected in the past cultural and/or social themes (Kaur, 2020). The qualitative survey and live interviews conducted on women of Indian and Pakistani origin living in urban centres show that through the cultural capital, these women sustain themselves against the emerging stereotypical norms of ageing in society. For example, the women interviewed indicated that they exercise, diet, and undergo beauty treatments, which they regard as liberating activities. However, this resistance suffers from several constraints. While the process of ageing as self-enhancement is somewhat more limiting to socio-economic class, ageing is at the root of much of the bias and discrimination (Calasanti, 2020; Slevin, 2010). It is crucial to note that socioeconomic status plays a part in how women experience, understand or perceive ageing.

Symbolic interactionism as advanced by Weber (1922) serves to build upon ageing by viewing it as socially constructed. From this angle, ageing is constructed by impressions and the symbols perceived by the individuals. Stakeholder interviews and observations of Pakistani women at the workplace and socializing indicate that social interactions determine ageing perception. These women argue that their relationships with young employees, relatives and friends influence their perceptions about ageing. Buying food and attending social events like 'kitty parties' and other wellness activities is a way 'through which older women can declare their youth and assert their continued existence' (Barrett and von Rohr, 2008; Weiss and Lang, 2012 p. 455).

Lastly, feminism theory also emphasizes that education overturns the social-cultural belief that ageing is a process that is accompanied by insignificance and reverses. Higher-educated women, especially from urban environments, perceive ageing not as a process resulting in deterioration, as presented by the abovementioned approach, but as a gradual life-enhancement process (Calasanti & Slevin, 2020). Despite the knowledge-enhancing effect captured in the above data, the gender analysis shows that women remain discriminated

against in the workplace based on age and gender. Urban-educated Pakistani women also continue to experience ageism in the workplace and society and their productivity is not respected because of their age, (Calasanti & Slevin, 2020).

Furthermore, UK-based studies (Ayalon et al., 2014; Crimmins & Zhang, 2019) have established that education has a very strong capacity to change the perspectives that people have towards ageing and make it possible for them to achieve new meanings and views of ageing, as being an active process. However, the primary data collected in Pakistan shows that the dearth of education continues to buoyage ageism and does not consider women in the elderly age group as valuable. The differences may be observed in a variety of settings and should explain the necessity for developing anti-ageing educational programs.

Feminist intersectionality also describes how gender, class and age are combined to produce different ageing experiences for women. Primary data evidence that women of higher socio-economic strata in the metros specifically counter prejudice against ageing fitness activities like exercise and beauty treatments. These practices are unaffordable for women from lower classes thereby perpetuating; class inequalities in ageing (Calasanti, 2020)

The aged women in rural areas are seen mostly to suffer from isolation and are engaged in enormous labour work which increase their household responsibilities and manual tasks for this reason they are affected by negative stereotype effects, which are associated with ageing (Harris, 2006; Gillearn & Higgs, 2014). The information indicated that it is easier for women to age positively if they are living in urban areas, and are well educated then they can gain more access to different opportunities which makes them capable of enhancing their self-asset. Nevertheless, rural women have never changed their position and are still constrained by traditional gender roles and economic challenges.

### Conclusion

This paper aims to understand ageing from cultural, gendered, and power perspectives, especially for women in urban Pakistan. Ageing is perceived as a socially construed aspect, with the close interplay between culture, socio-economic class, gender and modernization. The study establishes that society, in the labour market and at home, strongly associates young and beautiful images; ageism and gender concerns become detrimental to women, especially in their employment (Levy, 2002; Twigg, 2007). General population members of urban parts, particularly educated women, as one of the health-obsessed generations, employ specific wellness practices to prevent ageing, inevitably limited by cultural definitions that cast ageing as an ontological loss instead of a developmental gain (Jakovljevic et al., 2021; Stephan et al., 2015).

Specifically, the paper employs symbolic interactionism to show how symbols and the relationships that surround them affect evaluations of ageing. It posits that ageing is a result of socioeconomic status, level of education, and spatial location rather than being a biological phenomenon as was earlier documented by Butler (1990), and Bordone et al., (2019). As an exception, the norms are slightly challenged by education and economic empowerment but the traditional gender roles hence continue to define ageing for women (Mehmood, 2018; Connell, 2009).

In Pakistan, aged perceptions are highly determined by the conventional cultural practices relating to family responsibilities. But slowly over the years, norms are changing due to urbanization and women are becoming educated and also joining wellness programs wherein aging is seen as a process for improving oneself which has been discussed by Kaur in 2020. These shifts counter gendered approaches to ageing and reveal the purpose of education and socio-economic class in reconstructing ageing.

## Research

This study entails a change of perception in society regarding ageing, and there is a need to make policies that will encourage equal wellness of other ageing people without discriminating between gender or age. It also stresses specific action to ensure there are positive female-friendly cultures that will disrupt ageist and gendered norms. Contrary to western societies, rural-urban ageing compromising perspectives remain inconclusively investigated in Pakistan, therefore, we recommend that more research focusing on rural-urban ageing differences and the effects of global trends on ageing perceptions in the non-Western countries.

## References

- Agulló-Tomás, M. S.-M.-G. (2019). Aproximación socio-espacial al envejecimiento ya los programas para cuidadoras/es de mayores. *Revista INFAD de Psicología. International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psycho*, 211-228.
- Augustyński, I. &. (2021). Being old in the age of ageing: Macro-level determinants of change in perception of old age threshold in EU countries. *European Research Studies Journal*, 24(Special Issue 3).
- Barrett, A. E. (2005). Gendered experiences in midlife: Implications for age identity. *Journal of Ageing Studies*, 19(2), 163-183.
- Barrett, A. E. (2008). Gendered perceptions of ageing: An examination of college students. *The International Journal of Ageing and Human Development*, 67(4), 359-386.
- Blumer, H. (1969). Symbolic interactionism. *Contemporary sociological theory*, 62.
- Blusi, M., Asplund, K., & Jong, M. (2013). Older family carers in rural areas: Experiences from using caregiver support services based on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). *Eur. J. Ageing*, 10, 191–199.
- Bordone, V. A. (2020). Forever young? An analysis of the factors influencing perceptions of ageing. *Ageing & Society*, 40(8), 1669-1693.
- Calasanti, T. (2020). Theorizing age relations. In *The Need for Theory*, (pp. 199-218). Routledge.
- Chien, W. T. (2006). Effects of a needs-based education programme for family carers with a relative in an intensive care unit: a quasi-experimental study. *International journal of nursing studies*, 43(1), 39-50.
- Crenshaw, R. P. (1989). A decade of pressure sore research: 1977-1987. *J Rehabil Res Dev*, 26(1), 63-74.
- Diehl, M. S. (2020). Optimizing ageing: A call for a new narrative. *American Psychologist*, 75(4), 577.
- Ehlinger-Martin, A. C.-L. (2016). Women's attitudes to beauty, ageing, and the place of cosmetic procedures: insights from the QUEST Observatory. *Journal of cosmetic dermatology*, 15(1), 89-94.
- Gilleard, C. &. (2014). *Cultures of ageing: Self, citizen and the body*. Routledge.
- Jakovljevic, M. B. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and public and global mental health from the perspective of global health security. 32(1), 6-14. *Psychiatria Danubina*.
- Jason L. Powell, H. T. (2014). Ageing and Globalization: A Global Analysis. *Globalistics and Globalization Studies*, 223–231.
- Kaur, K. &. (2020). Social media: a blessing or a curse? Voice of owners in the beauty and wellness industry. *The TQM Journal*, 34(5), 1039-1056.
- Keyes, C. L. (2012). Chronological and subjective age differences in flourishing mental health and major depressive episodes. *Aging & mental health*, 16(1), 67-74.

- Mehmood, S. C. (2018). Female Higher Education in Pakistan: An Analysis of Socio-Economic and Cultural Changes. *Advances in Social Science Research Journal*.
- Rothermund, K. d. (2021). Age-related attributions of experienced changes in life: Origins and implications. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 76(5), 881-893.
- Sasha Johfre, A. S. (2023, May 3). The Social Construction of Age: Concepts and Measurement. *The Annual Review of Sociology*, pp. 339–58.
- Scharff, C. (2013). 6 Silencing differences: The “unspoken” dimensions of “speaking for others”. In *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process*, (pp. 83-95). Routledge.
- Stephan, Y. S. (2015). “Feeling younger, walking faster”: subjective age and walking speed in older adults. *Age*, 37, 1-12. *Age*, 37, 1-12.
- Stuart-Hamilton, I. (n.d.). *An Introduction to Gerontology*.
- Swift, H. J. (2017). The risks of ageism model: How ageism and negative attitudes toward age can be a barrier to active ageing. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 11(1), 195-231.
- Tomás, M. S. (2018). Género y evaluación de programas de apoyo para cuidadoras/es de mayores. *Prisma Social: revista de investigación social*, , (21), 391-415.
- Weiss, D. &. (2012). “They” are old but “I” feel younger: Age-group dissociation as a self-protective strategy in old age. *Psychology and ageing*, 27(1), 153.
- Wettstein, M. P. (2024). Postponing Old Age: Evidence for Historical Change Toward a Later Perceived Onset of Old Age. *Psychology and Ageing*.
- WHO. (2024, 9 26). Ageing and health. Retrieved from World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>
- Becker, R., & Mayer, K. U. (2018). Societal Change and Educational Trajectories of Women and Men Born between 1919 and 1986 in (West) Germany. *European Sociological Review*, 35(2), 147–168. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcy052>
- Crimmins, E. M. 67.
- Hewitt, J. O. (1976). Developing Concepts of Materiality and Disclosure. *Bus. Law.*, 32, 887.
- Holstein, J. A. (2000). The self we live by: Narrative identity in a postmodern world.
- , & Zhang, Y. S. (2019). Ageing populations, mortality, and life expectancy. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45(1), 69-89.
- Stephan, Y., Sutin, A. R., & Terracciano, A. (2015). How old do you feel? The role of age discrimination and biological ageing in subjective age. *PloS one*, 10(3), e0119293.
- Gecas, V. (1982). The self-concept. *Annual review of sociology*, 8, 1-33.
- Gecas, V., & Burke, P. J. (1995). Self and identity. *Sociological perspectives on social psychology*, 41-
- Mead, G. H., & Strauss, A. L. (1934). *The social psychology of George Herbert Mead*.
- Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic interactionism: A social structural version*. (No Title).
- Fry, T. (2009). *Design futuring*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 71-77.
- Levy, B. R., Slade, M. D., Kunkel, S. R., & Kasl, S. V. (2002). Longevity is increased by positive self-perceptions of ageing. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 83(2), 261.
- Kornadt, A. E., de Paula Couto, C., & Rothermund, K. (2022). Views on ageing—current trends and future directions for cross-cultural research. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 6(2), 5.
- Slevin, K. F. (2010). “If I had lots of money... I'd have a body makeover:” Managing the Ageing Body. *Social Forces*, 88(3), 1003-1020.
- Harris, A. (2004). Distributed leadership and school improvement: Leading or misleading? *Educational management administration & leadership*, 32(1), 11-24.
- Gilleard, C., & Higgs, P. (2014). *Cultures of ageing: Self, citizen and the body*. Routledge.

- Barrett, A. E., & Robbins, C. (2008). The multiple sources of women's ageing anxiety and their relationship with psychological distress. *Journal of Ageing and Health*, 20(1), 32-65.
- Zorrilla-Muñoz, V., Agulló-Tomás, M. S., Rodríguez-Blázquez, C., Ayala, A., Fernandez-Mayoralas, G., & Forjaz, M. J. (2022). Ageing Perception as a Key Predictor of Self-Rated Health by Rural Older People—A Study with Gender and Inclusive Perspectives. *Land*, 11(3), 323. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land11030323>
- Thompson, J. K., Heinberg, L. J., Altabe, M., & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (1999). *Exacting beauty: Theory, assessment, and treatment of body image disturbance*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Katz, W. A. (2005). An examination of the relationship between physical appearance, personality, internalization of sociocultural norms, and anxiety about aging among middle-aged White women. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66, 2826.
- McCabe, M. P., Ricciardelli, L. A., & James, T. (2007). A longitudinal study of body change strategies of fitness centre attendees. *Eating Behaviors*, 8, 492–496.
- Ricciardelli, L. A., & McCabe, M. P. (2004). A biopsychosocial model of disordered eating and the pursuit of muscularity in adolescent boys. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130, 179–205.
- McLean, S. A., Paxton, S. J., & Wertheim, E. H. (2009). Factors associated with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating in women in midlife. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 43, 527–536
- Tiggemann, M. (2005). Television and adolescent body image: The role of program content and viewing motivation. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24, 361–381.
- Slevec, J., & Tiggemann, M. (2011). Media exposure, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating in middle-aged women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(4), 617–627. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684311420249>
- Abdullah, M., Shoukat, A., & Chaudhary, M. G. (2021). Into the Civic life: The Nexus of urbanization, education and women's empowerment in Pakistan. *iRASD Journal of Economics*, 3(2), 212-222.
- Zafar, A., & Iqbal, S. (2024). Unleashing the Full Potential: Understanding the Economic and Socio-Economic Consequences of Female Labour Shortage in Karachi. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 24(2), 19-39.
- Fry, Christine & Dickerson-Putman, Jeanette & Draper, Patricia & Ikels, Charlotte & Keith, Jennie & Glascock, Anthony & Harpending, Henry. (2009). *Culture and the Meaning of a Good Old Age*. 10.5040/9798400634932.ch-005.
- Twigg, J. (2013). Fashion, the body, and age. *The handbook of fashion studies*, 78-94.
- Calasanti, T. M., & Slevin, K. F. (2001). *Gender, social inequalities, and aging*. Rowman Altamira.