



# “Can the Older Adults Speak?” The Capability Approach and Breaking the Silence of Older Adults in Ageism Research \*

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**Abstract:** What do older adults say about ageism? How should our theoretical conceptualisation as well as future policies be shaped by their own voices, perspectives, and experiences? Reviewing the existing literature on ageism in Türkiye demonstrates that voices of older adults are partially silenced and empirically dominated by voices of non-older adults. Adopting a critical epistemological position against such a marginalisation, we aim to centre the agency of older adults by evaluating ageism through normative and theoretical perspectives of Sen's capability approach advocating a focus upon individuals' well-being in relation to their freedom to achieve valuable beings and doings rather than exclusively concentrating on what they materially possess. In this research, employing a quantitative method of inquiry, we drew upon empirical data collected from 152 older adults through face-to-face interviews during which Palmore's ageism index alongside a personal information form was utilized. Our findings revealed three critical insights. First, ageism may still remain a prevalent social issue even in cultural contexts like Türkiye where “respect for older adults” is a hegemonic norm; however, its manifestation can shift from overt hostile treatments to more ambivalent forms of benevolent prejudices as well as patronising behaviours. Second, the study finds no statistically significant variation in ageism scores across diverse demographic groups, which surprisingly suggests that older adults share a collective vulnerability to ageism and are remarkably equal in being subject to ageism. Finally, challenging orthodox utilitarian economic assumptions, our third finding indicates that resource-ownership does not reliably predict individuals' freedom from ageism and thus their well-being. In light of these findings, we conclude that ageism research in Türkiye requires a “sociological-turn” that prioritizes the agency of older adults to foster more nuanced and insightful theoretical conceptualisations as well as more robust policy frameworks.

**Keywords:** Ageism, Older Adults, Capability Approach, Equality, Türkiye.

\* We have not used any form of artificial intelligence technology at any stage of writing this paper.

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### “Yaşlılar Sesini Duyurabilir Mi?”

#### Yapabilirlik Yaklaşımı ve Yaşlı Ayrımcılığı Çalışmalarında Yaşlıların Sessizliğini Kırma<sup>1</sup>

**Öz:** Yaşlı ayrımcılığı konusunda yaşlılar ne söylüyor? Yaşlıların kendi bakış açılarını ve deneyimlerini esas alırsak yaşlı ayrımcılığı konusundaki kuramsal kavramsallaştırmalarımız ve gelecekteki politikalarımız nasıl şekillenmelidir? Türkiye’de hali hazırda varolan yaşlı ayrımcılığına ilişkin literatür incelendiğinde, yaşlı nüfusun kısmen sessizleştirildiği ve ilgili literatürün daha çok yaşlı olmayan bireylerden toplanan veriler ışında oluşturulduğu görülmektedir. Söz konusu marjinalleşmeye karşı eleştirel bir epistemolojik pozisyon alan bu çalışma yaşlı ayrımcılığına odaklanmakta; yaşlı ayrımcılığını yaşlıların failliklerini merkeze alarak ve birey refahını sadece sahiplikler üzerinden değil fakat kişilerin değerli buldukları oluş ve fiilleri gerçekleştirme özgürlüğü üzerinden değerlendirmeyi öneren Sen’in yapabilirlik yaklaşımı çerçevesinde değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Nicel yöntem ile gerçekleştirilmiş bu çalışmada, 152 yaşlıyla yüz yüze mülakatlar yapılmış ve bu mülakatlarda Palmore’un yaşlı ayrımcılığı endeksi kişisel bir bilgi formuyla birlikte uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, üç önemli olguya işaret etmektedir. Birincisi, yaşlı ayrımcılığı, Türkiye gibi “yaşlılara saygılı olmanın” hegemonik bir norm olduğu kültürel bağlamlarda dahi varlığını sürdürebilmekte, fakat bu ayrımcılığın tezahürü açık bir düşmanlık içeren tutumlardan ziyade hayırseverci önyargılar ve kibirli davranışlarla şekillenebilmektedir. İkinci olarak, araştırma yaşlı ayrımcılığı ile farklı demografik gruplar arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark bulmamıştır. Bu çerçevede, bulgular yaşlıların maruz kaldıkları ayrımcılık konusunda kolektif bir kırılganlığı paylaştığını ve ayrımcılığa maruz kalma konusunda eşitlendiklerini göstermektedir. Üçüncü olarak, çalışma kaynak sahipliğine ilişkin ölçütlerin bireylerin yaşlı ayrımcılığından kaçınmasını sağladığı ve bu anlamıyla da birey refahının güvenilir ölçütleri arasında sayılabileceği yönündeki ortodoks faydacı ekonomik varsayımların her zaman doğru olmayabileceğini bulgulamıştır. Söz konusu bulgular ışığında bu çalışma, hem daha derinlikli ve ayrıntılı kavramsallaştırmalar geliştirebilmek hem de daha güçlü siyasalar üretebilmek için, Türkiye’de yaşlı ayrımcılığı çalışmalarında yaşlıların failliklerini önceleyen bir “sosyolojik dönüşün” gerekli olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kavramlar:** Yaşlı Ayrımcılığı, Yaşlı, Yapabilirlik Yaklaşımı, Eşitlik, Türkiye.

## Introduction

Representing a seminal epistemological opposition to the modernist, universalist as well as colonialist accounts, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a leading figure in post-colonial studies, has powerfully asked “Can the Subaltern Speak?” ([1988] 2023). By this, Spivak has in fact provided one of the most profound critiques against the orientalist intellectual inquiries that often tend to evaluate and reflect upon the beings oppressed, marginalised, and repressed as well as their social conditions by placing the subjective accounts of the dominant and powerful actors at the centre of the social inquiry. What Spivak has been criticizing is regrettably still quite a common mode of intellectual inquiry not only in international academic literature, but also within the scholarly literature of Türkiye across various academic disciplines. In this literature, the subaltern, in other words disadvantaged ones, are often taken as subject of scholarly evaluation in a way they are (un)consciously silenced by the perspectives and voices of author(s). Broadly speaking, such an (un)intentional quelling of the spread of disadvantaged voices is a significantly prevailing characteristic of the scholarly literature on older adults and ageing population in Türkiye where their own voices are given insufficient place within the empirical social inquiries.

1 We truly appreciate constructive comments of three anonymous referees who have allocated time to read and evaluate the initial version of this paper in a comprehensive manner.

Considering this unfortunate, and partially silencing, characteristic of the existing scholarly literature on older adults in Türkiye, our epistemological position is built upon the aim of giving the voices of older adults a central place in this study. We primarily focus on the question of ageism by evaluating an older adults' perceptions and experiences based on the normative and conceptual frameworks of the capability approach which was initially developed by Amartya Sen. Our reasoning to evaluate the question of ageism based on Amartya Sen's capability approach is twofold. Firstly, the capability approach, particularly Amartya Sen's version of it rather than the one advanced by Martha Nussbaum's universalist perspective, explicitly underlines the significance of agency aspect in evaluative exercises regarding, for example, individuals' well-being, quality of life, inequalities as well as poverty. Thus, its normative framework profoundly aligns with our epistemological position that is reasoned by the explicit need to give older adults' own voices, thoughts, perceptions, and/or experiences more space in scholarly discussions on ageism. Secondly, Sen's capability approach that advocates evaluating an individual's state of being based on her/his achievement(s) of valuable beings and doings provides an explanatory conceptual framework to reflect on the question of ageism in a more nuanced and advanced way since it does not constrain the evaluation of individuals' well-being with their resource-ownership.

Based on the epistemological reasoning mentioned above and its explicit alignments with the normative and theoretical frameworks of Sen's capability approach, this study drew upon quantitative empirical data gathered through face-to-face interviews with 152 older adults through a particular form of the interview schedule derived from Palmore's (2001) ageism scale that is frequently employed by researchers aiming to explore the subjective perceptions of individuals regarding ageism. By these means, we aimed to shed light on three issues related to ageism. First, considering that ageism does not always reveal itself as a treatment motivated only by negative feelings of the perpetrators but can appear in relation to positively motivated behaviours too, we aimed to clarify the most and least common forms of ageism observed in the population we researched. Second, since individuals' well-being and thus their achievements of a particular state of being, such as being free from ageism, can be influenced by their social characteristics, we aimed to explore the variation in older adults' achievements of being free from age-based discrimination by looking at the relationality of this variation with their social characteristics. Third, considering the common logos observed especially in orthodox economic sciences and undoubtedly assuming that individuals' resource-ownerships and their well-beings are inevitably correlated, we particularly aimed to look at whether the ownership of certain material resources leads to differences

in older adults' experiences of ageism. In line with these three aims, we ended up with three findings. Firstly, ageism is a prevalent social question even in cultural contexts where, like Türkiye, respect for older adults is a common narrative and hegemonic social norm anticipated from non-older adults in everyday practices, especially when our conception of it becomes more comprehensive by involving benevolently motivated ageism practices. Secondly, even though a variation in older adults' experiences of ageism according to their social characteristics is observed in descriptive analysis of our research, this is not a statistically significant variation. This is to say that any older adult (e.g. male or female, affluent or deprived, married or single, and so forth) is hardly immune from age-based discriminative practices in their everyday practices; and thus, if there is an equality among older adults, this is the equality of being subject to ageism. Thirdly, even though resource-ownership is usually considered as a strong predictor of individuals' quality of life and well-being, this is not always fully admissible perspective since holding various forms of resources does not necessarily lead older adults to achieve freedom from ageism as observed in our analysis. This finding leads us to consider the significance of avoiding "commodity fetishism" in evaluating individuals' well-being and underlines the need for a "sociological-turn" in researching diverse aspects of well-being and disadvantage among older adults too.

### **The Literature of Partial Silence: Talking about Ageism without Older Adults**

The term ageism was initially coined by the prominent figure in gerontological studies, namely Robert Butler, after his observation of a social unrest that appeared as a protest against the construction of decent public houses for older adults. Butler's identification of ageism as a patterned process of behaviours formed by prejudiced thoughts and attitudes based on people's age (1969, pp.243-244) is today commonly accepted by the relevant scholarly literature (see Palmore, 1999, p.45; Nelson, 2004, p.57) and international policy organization such as World Health Organization (2020), but has also been conceptually and theoretically advanced since it first appeared in the literature. Nelson (2004, p.131), for example, has moved beyond the broad conceptualization of ageism that was put forth by Butler, and advanced it by underlining three aspects that age-based discrimination involves: (1) cognitive aspect of ageism referring to immediate categorization of individuals based on their age, (2) affective aspect of ageism referring to feelings and emotions stimulated by non-older adults' fears and concerns regarding future-self, and (3) behavioural aspect of ageism referring to differentiated attitudes, treatments or behaviours to older adults due to their advanced age.

Even though such extension concerning the conceptualisation of ageism is well-formed and illustrate an explanatory characteristic to shed light on the scope of age-based discriminative practices within the domain of interpersonal relations, it does not address that ageism does not only appear in personal interactions of individuals with others, but also occasionally observed in the sphere of non-personalized domains of societal organisations, such as within the domains of customs and conventions, institutional arrangements, cultural patterns as well as diverse normative value sets. This is in fact emphasized, *albeit* implicitly, by some other scholars in the existing literature (see Butler, 1980, p.8; Palmore, 1999, p.31; Ayalon and Tesch-Römer, 2018, pp.1-2); yet these scholarly emphases should also be accompanied with that diverse forms of ageism observed in non-personalized domains of everyday life often demonstrate a non-intentional characteristic. Therefore, conceptualisation of ageism should not be constrained to an understanding of age-based discriminations appearing as an intentionally attempted behaviour or consciously developed perceptions/feelings of non-older adults toward older people, since it also manifests itself in various forms within the non-personalized domains of societal organisations where age-based discriminative practices may befall either intentionally or unintentionally.

Indeed, unintentional forms of ageism observed in both interpersonal relations and non-personalized domains of societal organizations are often more difficult to address and thus harder to struggle with. This is because explicit and straightforward attempts aiming to degrade, stigmatize or alienate older adults are hardly observable in unintentional forms of ageism even though such forms still discursively or practically place older adults in a distinct position *vis-à-vis* positions that they place non-older adults. A primary illustration of this form of ageism is, for example, "talking to older adults with a louder voice" which is usually considered as a help or convenience provided them and can hardly be signified as a hostile attempt aiming to intentionally degrade them. Yet, such behaviours in essence illustrate a "benevolent prejudice" (Whitley and Kite, 2010; Glick and Fiske, 2003; Plous, 2003 quoted from Schmalz and Mowatt, 2014, p.248) referring to positive attitudes towards a group but still keeps them in an inferior position. Obviously, not all positive attitudes and behaviours to older adults can be categorised as form of prejudice, but it is often challenging to distinguish the ones involving prejudice (Cary, Chasteen and Remedios, 2017, p.28). Conceptually speaking, various characteristics of ageism demonstrate its multifaceted nature that makes the empirical evaluation of ageism a challenging scholarly practice. One way to overcome such a challenge, we believe, is to keep the informational source of empirical evaluation as broad and diverse as possible, and thus benefit from a large empirical evidence with the purpose of exploring its multifaceted nature.

However, scholarly empirical literature on ageism in Türkiye demonstrates a significant gap that most works in this area are built upon empirical evidences gathered from non-older adults and thus older adults' own voices, perceptions, and experiences are, to a certain extent, silenced. This is in fact one of the noticeable obstacles in front of the objective of developing a comprehensive and insightful understanding regarding the multifaceted characteristics of ageism in Türkiye. To illustrate, in Türkiye, some of the empirically underpinned studies of ageism have drawn upon a data collected from those who are from different life-courses than old age such as teen, youth, adults, and late adult life-courses and those who are from different occupations. However, perhaps the most common research sample in exploring ageism in Türkiye are those that have chosen the university students as their source of empirical evidences. In addition to these, significant number of studies on ageism in Türkiye explore it in times of social crises and catastrophes such as pandemic and earthquakes despite the fact that ageism is a permanent social issue that does not merely appear in times of social crises. These studies are undoubtedly valuable in deepening our understanding regarding ageism among the non-older adult groups in Türkiye as well as in times of emergencies/crises; yet they collectively bring forth the need to give voices of older adults a broadened space in this scholarly literature not only in times of crises but on a permanent basis. In other words, the voices of older adults are given an insufficient space within the existing empirical literature regarding ageism and are only involved by a limited number of studies, which demonstrates the partial silence of their voice in the existing scholarly literature of Türkiye.

Taking this partial silence of the existing literature into account, we believe that one of the best means to involve older adults' voices into a research on ageism is to draw upon the normative position and theoretical framework of the capability approach due to its qualities that (1) normatively allow to incorporate older adults' own voices through its deliberate incompleteness and (2) conceptually provide an evaluative framework to analyse individuals' well-being with reference to their achievements of being free from age-based discrimination without constraining the evaluative practice with material resource-ownership. Below, we present a non-exhaustive summary of the capability approach and explain how it can be applied as a theoretical framework in evaluating ageism.

### **Sen's Capability Approach: A Deliberately Incomplete Approach Moving Beyond the Resource-Ownership**

The capability approach is a normative evaluative framework initially developed by Amartya Sen to assess various social issues involving, but not limited to, poverty (Sen,

1983a; 1983b; 1985a), justice and inequality (Sen, 1990; 1992; 2009), development (Sen, 1987; 1999a), and well-being (Sen, 1985b; 1993). Martha Nussbaum has further advanced the approach for the purpose of evaluating gender inequalities as well as constitutional arrangements; and even though there are significant differences between Sen and Nussbaum's versions of the capability approach (see Nussbaum, 2000, pp.11-15; 2011, pp.17-21; Robeyns, 2003, pp.68-70; 2005, pp.103-105), the approach in the most general sense advocates to evaluate individuals' states of being, as well as social arrangements, according to people's capability, or freedom, to achieve functionings that are valuable beings and doings (Sen, 2009, p.231-232; Alkire and Deneulin, 2009, p.31; Alkire, 2005, p.122; Arun, 2016a, p.14; 2018, p.237, 2022, p.2) rather than what they possess. In this regard, it avoids the commodity fetishism and claims that any evaluative exercise regarding individuals' (dis)advantage, well-being, poverty, or inequality cannot be constrained by individuals' resource-ownership. Instead, according to Sen, such evaluative exercises should be extended to incorporate their freedom, or capability, to make use of their resources with the purpose of achieving a good life formed in line with their own conception of the good. By this claim, the approach distinguishes itself from mainstream normative frameworks that focus upon individuals' ownership of various resources such as income, rights, or utilities (Arun, 2022, p.4) and subsequently underlines that means, or resources, are only instrumentally valuable to achieve intrinsically valuable ends which can be a being or a doing valued in line with individuals' own conception of the good.

Sen gives the example of bike ownership to clarify the distinction of his approach that moves beyond the resource-ownership in evaluating a person's state of being. He underlines that individuals' ownership, say ownership of a bike as an instrument or means, is not valuable on its own, but its function, *viz.* mobility/transportation, makes it valuable (see Sen, 1983b, p.160; 1987, p.6). In other words, possession of a means, such as a bike, is valuable so long as it enables the owner to achieve its function, such as mobility/transportation. Functions of means in the capability approach are conceptualised as functionings referring to "various things a person may value doing or being" (Sen, 1999a, p.75; see also Sen, 1990, p.113; 1992, p.39; Robeyns, 2005, p.95) and they can be basic valuable beings and doings (e.g. being healthy, well-educated, employed, or access to shelter) as well as a more complex ones (e.g. being recognized, developing self-respect, or not being ashamed in society).

However, sociologically speaking, individuals have different conceptions of the good and possess varied reasons to value varied beings and doings, which refers to the inter-end variation among them (Sen, 1990, p.120; 1992, p.85). In addition to this sociological observation, Sen also normatively claims that people should have freedom to form their own ends (see Sen, 2009, p.233) and they should be in charge of identifying what makes

their life good, which leads his capability approach to purposively avoid identifying a clear-cut list of valuable functionings. This is to say that even though Sen (see 1979, p.218) underlines certain basic functionings as valuable beings and doings such as being healthy, access to education, having sufficient nutrition, he deliberately refrains from proposing a clear-cut list of functionings due to the inter-end variation among people as well as his normative liberal political position. His explicit reluctance from identifying what makes one's life good, or from provision of a list of functionings, (see Sen, 2004, p.78; 2005, p.157-160) refers to the "deliberately incomplete" characteristic of his capability approach (Arun, 2022, p.3-6). This deliberate incompleteness aims to give people themselves more space to voice their own perspectives in "public discussion" which is both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable (see Sen, 1999a, p.152; 1999b, p.10; 2009, pp.338-345). Therefore, Sen's capability approach -with its deliberately incomplete characteristic- aligns well with the intellectual purposes that prioritize giving people a voice and thus incorporating their subjectivity into scholarly research as well as evaluative exercises.

On the other hand, a crucial point to be attentive is to that applying Sen's capability approach to evaluate individuals' states of being in terms of their well-being, (dis) advantage, poverty, or inequality requires a clarification regarding the space of evaluation. The evaluative exercises based on the capability approach should take the distinction between analysis of "individuals' capability" and their "functioning achievement" into account, which is unfortunately overlooked in many applications of the capability approach in Türkiye. As noted above, the ultimate concern of the capability approach is individuals' freedom or *ability to achieve* (Sen, 2002, pp.83-84) what they have reason to value, rather than *what they (have) achieve(d)*. This is to say that the capability approach advocates "what a person *can* do rather than what he *does* do" (Sen, 1981, p.209) since a person "could have a good deal of freedom, without achieving much" (Sen, 1985c, p.3). To illustrate the significance of the distinction between functioning achievement and freedom to achieve, Sen refers to two starving individuals, one starving due to economic poverty and the other choosing to starve in line with her/his own conception of the good life, say fasting because of her/his religious belonging or following a particular diet due to aesthetic concerns. Both of these individuals starve in outcome and thus both of them can be considered as non-achievers of the functioning of being free from starvation in this case. In other words, they are equal in the evaluative space of functioning achievement as non-achievers of the functioning of being free from starvation; yet they are still very unequal in the evaluative space of capability since fasting "is choosing to starve when one does have other options" (Sen, 1992, p.52). This is to say that having options, or freedom to choose, makes an individual relatively more

advantaged, *vis-à-vis* those who do not have such options, regardless of what they (have) achieve(d) in the outcome.

However, evaluating people's states of being based on their capability, rather than functioning achievements, brings forth great methodological difficulties, especially for the quantitative applications of the approach, since it requires to incorporate counterfactual options, in other words unachieved potential choices (Comim, 2008, p.174; see also Zimmermann, 2006, p.478; Walby, 2012, p.105-106). In the face of this difficulty, Arun (see 2016b, pp.158-167) offers a methodological and conceptual innovation suggesting to evaluate people's capability, *albeit* qualitatively, by focusing upon the "process of functioning achievement" in order to make inter-personal analysis of variation in individuals' capability. In fact, Sen also recognizes this methodological difficulty; and therefore he suggests to look at people's "realized states", or achieved functionings, when the purpose of evaluation is to analyse people's disadvantage in the domains of basic functionings (see Sen, 1992, p.52). In line with Sen's proposition, Robeyns (2005, p.101), a leading figure of the capability approach, claims that it sometimes makes even more sense to focus on functioning achievements, rather than capability, as long as the aim is to evaluate people's well-being in basic functionings (e.g. the functioning of being safe from domestic violence). This is because, according to her, we have quite plausible reasons to assume in the first place that everyone values achieving basic functionings, such as no-one wants to be beaten up by another person in the household (Ibid). However, beyond this plausible argument, the appropriate space of evaluation is functionings, rather than capability, when the evaluative exercise aims to concentrate on individuals' well-being achievements (Robeyns, 2005, p.103; 2006, p.354), since it is the achievement itself, rather than capability, that allows us to evaluate well-being outcomes or "realized states".

In brief, a particular characteristic of the capability approach, namely its deliberate incompleteness, aligns with our epistemological position that aims to give voices and perspectives of older adults a broader space in an evaluative exercise on ageism. Thus, it serves quite well to fill an observable gap within the existing literature on ageism in Türkiye where most of the scholarly inquiries takes non-older adult groups as sources of their empirical evidence. In addition to this, the theoretical framework of the capability approach that moves beyond the ownership-centred analysis of individuals' states of being and advocates to explore individuals' achievements in the domains of basic functionings has a great potential in terms of providing an advanced and nuanced evaluation of well-being among older adults as we consider that achieving the freedom from age-based discrimination is a basic functioning valued by older adults. Below, we provide information and explanation regarding the method employed in this study as well as empirical sources of our findings.

## Method, Empirical Sources of Findings, and the Rationale

As we emphasized above, this study has sought to explore three issues associated with ageism among a particular older adult population in Türkiye by employing an epistemological position giving older adults' voices and/or perceptions a broader space as well as drawing upon the normative and theoretical frameworks of the capability approach. These issues were the identification of the most and least common forms of ageism, variation in older adults' achievement of being free from ageism according to their social characteristics, and whether the ownership of certain resources leads to difference in experiences of ageism among an older adult population. Since the empirical sources behind the findings of this study drew upon the voices and perceptions of the older adult participants themselves, rather than from a non-older adult demographic, we valued to follow a face-to-face interview method that directly shaped our findings and discussion.

Building on the rationale that our (1) epistemological position, (2) theoretical framework, and (3) means of data gathering should all have been in conformity with each other, we decided to make use of Palmore's (2001, p.575) ageism index. Our choice to employ Palmore's ageism index was not only underpinned by the fact that it is one of the most cited and thus widely acknowledged indexes in the ageism research globally. More importantly, our choice to use it was also reasoned with its three qualities seeking to shed light upon the (1) prevalence of ageism in different societies, (2) prevalent types of ageism, and (3) variation in ageism experiences among subgroups of older people (ibid. p.572). Since these qualities, particularly the second and third ones, straightforwardly overlapped with our aims mentioned above, the application of the Palmore's index was the most robust alignment with our study.

The Palmore (2001) ageism index comprises 20 questions focusing on the aspects of age-based discrimination and draws on a three-point Likert scale (0: Never, 1: Once, 2: More than Once) measuring ageism experienced by older adult population across diverse domains of everyday practices. In the index, the total possible scores range from a minimum of zero (0) to a maximum of forty (40), where higher scores indicates a higher level of age-based discrimination. The index was previously adapted into the context of Türkiye where its content validity index was found to be 0.89, the Cronbach alpha value was 0.86, and the item-total correlation values for all items were "above 0.31 (Erol et al., 2016, p.170). Based on these values, the scholars have concluded that it is a valid and reliable instrument for Türkiye as well as appropriate to the Turkish language and culture (ibid.). Yet, applying Palmore's ageism index to a diverse group of older adult population also required us to collect information regarding participants' social characteristics since we aimed to look at the variation

in functioning achievement of being free from ageism as well as to what extent this variation is related to their social characteristics. Therefore, in the data gathering process, we also applied a personal information form involving questions regarding demographic factors, economic indicators, and health-related information along with the index. This provided us an opportunity to look at how experiences of ageism demonstrate variation across diverse social characteristics of older adults and thus to conduct an interpersonal comparison concerning the functioning achievement of being free from ageism among a diverse older adult population.

We applied Palmore's ageism index and the personal information form to a population of older adults who are 60 or above. In fact, there are different views regarding who should be considered as an older adult, since the meaning of age and the ageing process demonstrate distinctions according to social structure of the context. In addition to this, international organisations identify older adults based on different chronological age, such as United Nations identifying older adults as those who are 60 years old or above and World Health Organization identifying older adults as those who are 65 years old or above (Ministry of Development, 2018, pp.4-5). Different views regarding who should be considered as older adults are also observed in the scholarly literature (see Balkay et al, 2024; Goswami et al, 2024; Hadida-Naus et al, 2025) where some scholars accept 60 years and above as older adult whilst some others refers to 65 years and above. In this study, we aimed to interview with those who are 60 years and above in order to involve maximum number of participants and have chosen our participants from those who have been enrolled in the 60+ Tazelenme University (a lifelong learning centre for older adults established by the Anadolu University in Eskisehir-Türkiye) in the 2025-2026 Academic Year, Fall Semester. At the 60+ Tazelenme University, the student population is 200 older adults who are 60 or above. After receiving all institutional and ethical approvals<sup>2</sup>, we aimed to conduct a complete enumeration rather than convenience sampling due to relatively small size of the population. Yet, we ended up with 152 interviews all of which were conducted through face-to-face meetings that took slightly more than a month since some participants expressed unwillingness to participate in interviews.

Before moving to discuss about our findings, we should underline an important methodological remark regarding the limitation of our research findings. We would like to underline that our findings have been derived from a particular social group of older adult population which is the 60+ Tazelenme University, which means that

2 Ethical approval was received from the Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities of the Hacettepe University on 23 September 2025. Document number: E-66777842-300-00004510932.

they are by no means generalizable to all older adults in Türkiye. Therefore, it should be noted that our discussion below should not be considered as general claims that explain the ageism experiences of all older adults in Türkiye. In addition to this, as can also be seen in the gender distribution in our sample, female participants are significantly more in numbers than male participants. Even though this is an inevitable result of the fact that most of the enrolled students in the 60+ Tazelenme University are female, this gender disparity in the sample should also be underlined before moving to discuss about our findings below.

### Findings and Discussion: What Do Older Adults Speak About?

In the process of the data analyses, we utilized the IBM SPSS Statistics 24 software to calculate frequencies as well as percentages of the participants' responses and thus identified the social characteristics of participants in relation to certain demographic qualities, socio-economic variables and health conditions (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of Participants*

| Variables          | Categories/Responses           | n   | %    |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----|------|
| Gender             | Male                           | 25  | 16,4 |
|                    | Female                         | 127 | 83,6 |
| Age                | 60- 64                         | 52  | 34,2 |
|                    | 65-74                          | 94  | 61,8 |
|                    | 75- 84                         | 6   | 3,9  |
| Marital Status     | Never Married                  | 8   | 5,3  |
|                    | Married                        | 88  | 57,9 |
|                    | Widowed                        | 36  | 23,7 |
|                    | Divorced                       | 20  | 13,2 |
| Living Arrangement | Alone                          | 36  | 23,7 |
|                    | With Spouse Only               | 81  | 53,3 |
|                    | With Child/Children            | 22  | 14,5 |
|                    | With Spouse and Child/Children | 5   | 3,3  |
|                    | With Relatives                 | 5   | 3,3  |
|                    | Other                          | 3   | 2,0  |
| Regular Income     | Yes                            | 145 | 95,4 |
|                    | No                             | 7   | 4,6  |

| Variables                        | Categories/Responses              | n   | %    |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|------|
| Level of Monthly Income          | 0 - 16.881                        | 20  | 13,2 |
|                                  | 16.882 - 26.115                   | 46  | 30,3 |
|                                  | 26.116 - 85.066                   | 86  | 56,6 |
| Perceived Income Adequacy        | Yes                               | 84  | 55,3 |
|                                  | No                                | 68  | 44,7 |
| Home Ownership                   | Yes                               | 136 | 89,5 |
|                                  | No                                | 16  | 10,5 |
| Social Security Registration     | None                              | 6   | 3,9  |
|                                  | Retirement Fund                   | 74  | 48,7 |
|                                  | Social Insurance Institution      | 60  | 39,5 |
|                                  | Social Security for Self-Employed | 12  | 7,9  |
| Health Status                    | Fair                              | 62  | 40,8 |
|                                  | Good                              | 83  | 54,6 |
|                                  | Very Good                         | 7   | 4,6  |
| Frequency of Hospital Visits     | Never                             | 2   | 1,3  |
|                                  | Rarely                            | 36  | 23,7 |
|                                  | Occasionally                      | 95  | 62,5 |
|                                  | Frequently                        | 19  | 12,5 |
| Health Problems in the Past Year | Yes                               | 111 | 73,0 |
|                                  | No                                | 41  | 27,0 |
| Chronic Disease Status           | Yes                               | 124 | 81,6 |
|                                  | No                                | 28  | 18,4 |

As can be noticed, the number of observations is very low in the category of "never" for the variable "frequency of hospital visits". Therefore, we merged this category with "rarely" before the analyses. Similar to this, concerning the category of the "other" in the variable "living arrangement", we should note that it is excluded from the analysis due to an insufficient sample size ( $n=3$ ). Apart from this, since the number of observations in certain categories were low ( $n<30$ ) and the normality assumption is not met, we draw upon non-parametric tests for inferential statistical analysis.

Regarding the ageism scale applied, Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to examine its reliability levels, and the number of observations ( $n$ ), mean, standard deviation, minimum-maximum, and median values were derived. The total scores for the ageism scale were found to be  $2.12\pm3.09$ , with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.72. These results indicate that the participants' perceptions of ageism were at a low level and that the ageism scale's reliability was within an acceptable range.

**Table 2**

*Analysis of the Ageism Scale*

| <b>Scale</b>        | <b>n</b> | <b>Mean<br/>(M)</b> | <b>Standard<br/>Deviation (SD)</b> | <b>Min-<br/>Max</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Reliability<br/>(<math>\alpha</math>)</b> |
|---------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Ageism Scale (0-40) | 152      | 2,12                | 3,09                               | 0-15                | 0,00          | 0,72                                         |

In the analyses, to identify the relationship between participants' characteristics and the scale scores, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied for variables with two groups while the Kruskal-Wallis test was used for variables with three or more groups were chosen. In cases where the Kruskal-Wallis test demonstrated significant variation, the All-pairwise comparison method was employed with the purpose of identifying the source of the variation. Therefore, variables analysed with the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test were provided in separate tables below.

Before moving to discuss the primary findings, we should explain the reasoning behind the categorizations of observations within one particular variable. Despite the fact that most of the categorizations within the variables given in the Table 1 above are self-evident and there is no further need to repeat them here, one variable and its corresponding categories need to be briefly explained here. As can be noticed, the intervals for the "level of monthly income" are uneven in our data. This was a deliberately structured categorization to identify the proportion of our participants struggling to maintain a decent standard of living with incomes falling below the official starvation and poverty lines. This categorization indicates that 13.2 percent of our research participants had an income lower than 16,881 TL, which was announced as the minimum pension line in July 2025, while 30.3 percent of them had an income between 16,881 TL and 26,115 TL, which means that 43.5 percent of the total participants in our research were living on an income below the official starvation line. In addition to this, the data also demonstrated that 56.6 percent of our participants in this research have an income between 26,116 TL and 85,066 TL, which indicated that more than half of the participants in our research were living below the official poverty line.

As noted above, one of the primary reasons why we employed the Palmore's ageism scale in this study was its quality serving for clarifying the prevalent types of ageism in a milieu. Applying the ageism scale to a socially diverse older adult population whose social characteristics are given above allowed us to specify the most and least prevalent types of ageism. In order to clarify these types of ageism, we first of all dichotomized our participants' responses on the three-point Likert scale in a way that "Never" was categorised as "No" while "Once" and "More than

Once" were grouped as "Yes". Subsequently, to provide a detailed examination of the distribution of responses across the scale items, frequency and percentage analyses were conducted for each item. The items were then ranked in descending sequence of prevalence, which yielded the Table 3 demonstrating the most and the least prevalent forms of ageism reported by our research participants.

**Table 3**

*The Most and the Least Prevalent Types of Ageism*

| Number | Items                                                          | Yes (n/%) | No (n/%) |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| 1      | I was told a joke that pokes fun at old people.                | 36/23,7   | 116/76,3 |
| 17     | Someone assumed I could not understand because of my age.      | 27/17,7   | 125/82,2 |
| 16     | Someone assumed I could not hear well because of my age.       | 25/16,4   | 127/83,6 |
| 18     | Someone told me, "You're too old for that."                    | 25/16,4   | 127/83,6 |
| 14     | I was denied employment because of my age.                     | 16/10,6   | 136/89,5 |
| 2      | I was sent a birthday card that pokes fun at old people.       | 12/7,9    | 140/92,1 |
| 3      | I was ignored or not taken seriously because of my age.        | 10/6,6    | 142/93,4 |
| 8      | I was denied a position of leadership because of my age.       | 10/6,6    | 142/93,4 |
| 7      | I had difficulty getting a loan because of my age.             | 9/5,9     | 143/94,1 |
| 15     | I was denied promotion because of my age.                      | 9/5,9     | 143/94,1 |
| 10     | I was treated with less dignity and respect because of my age. | 9/5,9     | 143/94,1 |
| 12     | A doctor or nurse assumed my ailments were caused by my age.   | 8/5,3     | 144/94,7 |
| 9      | I was rejected as unattractive because of my age.              | 7/3,6     | 145/95,4 |
| 5      | I was patronized or "talked down to" because of my age.        | 5/3,3     | 147/96,7 |
| 19     | My house was vandalized because of my age.                     | 5/3,3     | 147/96,7 |
| 13     | I was denied medical treatment because of my age.              | 5/3,3     | 147/96,7 |
| 4      | I was called an insulting name related to my age.              | 3/2       | 149/98   |
| 20     | I was victimized by a criminal because of my age.              | 3/2       | 149/98   |
| 11     | A waiter or waitress ignored me because of my age.             | 1/0,7     | 151/99,3 |
| 6      | I was refused rental housing because of my age.                | 0/0       | 152/100  |

As illustrated in Table 3, the most prevalent form of ageism encountered by participants in this research was mockery through age-based jokes (n=36; 23.7 percent). This was followed by the assumption that they could not comprehend the ongoing conversation due to their age (n=27; 17.7 percent). Ranked third were two different experiences receiving equal frequencies in the table that the assumptions of hearing impairment (n=25; 16.4 percent) and being told they were too old to perform certain tasks (n=25; 16.4 percent). These items appeared as the most frequent, or prevalent, forms of ageist behaviours that older adult participants in our research experience.

However, the overall ranking of all items in the scale can be considered as a reference to low level of hostile forms of ageism (like housing discrimination, being victimized by a criminal, insulting naming, denied medical treatment, and so forth) and high levels of behaviours of ageism (like making jokes, assuming they cannot understand or hear well) that points toward benevolent prejudice. Thus, the results demonstrate that ageism does not always occur in the form of negative discrimination, but in some cases may demonstrate forms of positive discrimination. However, more importantly, the results of our research given in Table 3 challenge the general view that ageism is less common in social contexts like Türkiye where respect for older adults is a hegemonic public norm, and indicate that ageism does not necessarily disappear in cultures where respect for older adults is a core value. In fact, these findings lead us to consider that the question of ageism can sometimes be re-configured into ambivalent and paternalistic forms. While ageism may shed its overt hostility in such social contexts, it may nonetheless persist and is reproduced under the guise of benevolent prejudice.

Another striking finding that our research leads us to consider was about variation, or inequality, among our older adult participants' experiences of ageism according to their social characteristics. Results from the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that levels of ageism did not differ significantly across variables regarding gender, regular income, perceived income adequacy, home ownership, health problems in the past year, and chronic disease status. This is given in the Table 4 below.

**Tabel 4**

*Comparison of Ageism Scale Scores by Participants' Various Characteristics*

| Variable                                | Categories | N   | Median | Mean Rank | U        | Z      | P     |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|-----|--------|-----------|----------|--------|-------|
| <b>Gender</b>                           | Female     | 127 | 0,00   | 73,76     | 1239,000 | -1,867 | 0,062 |
|                                         | Male       | 25  | 2,00   | 90,44     |          |        |       |
| <b>Regular Income</b>                   | Yes        | 145 | 0,00   | 76,68     | 481,000  | -0,251 | 0,802 |
|                                         | No         | 7   | 0,00   | 72,71     |          |        |       |
| <b>Perceived Income Adequacy</b>        | Yes        | 84  | 0,00   | 74,02     | 2647,500 | -0,833 | 0,405 |
|                                         | No         | 68  | 0,50   | 79,57     |          |        |       |
| <b>Home Ownership</b>                   | Yes        | 136 | 0,00   | 76,73     | 1056,500 | -0,204 | 0,838 |
|                                         | No         | 16  | 1,00   | 74,53     |          |        |       |
| <b>Health Problems in the Past Year</b> | Yes        | 111 | 0,00   | 77,42     | 2173,500 | -0,456 | 0,648 |
|                                         | No         | 41  | 0,00   | 74,01     |          |        |       |
| <b>Chronic Disease Status</b>           | Yes        | 124 | 0,00   | 76,46     | 1731,500 | -0,023 | 0,982 |
|                                         | No         | 28  | 0,00   | 76,66     |          |        |       |

\*: p<0,05 \*\*: p<0,01 \*\*\*: p<0,001

As can be seen in the Table 4 above, the functioning achievement of being free from ageism is slightly varied across some variables, yet this variation, or inequality, is not a statistically significant variation. To illustrate, the results tell us that females achieve the functioning of being free from ageism more than males; yet this variation is not statistically significant. Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, no statistically significant differences were either observed in the ageism scale scores according to participants' age, marital status, living arrangement, level of monthly income, social security registration, and frequency of hospital visits. This is given in Table 5 below.

**Tabel 5**

*Comparison of Ageism Scale Scores by Participants' Various Characteristics*

| Variable                            | Categories                        | N  | Median | Mean Rank | $\chi^2$ | Degree of Freedom (dof) | P     |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----|--------|-----------|----------|-------------------------|-------|
| <b>Age</b>                          | 60-64                             | 52 | 0,50   | 73,81     | 0,426    | 2                       | 0,808 |
|                                     | 65-74                             | 94 | 0,00   | 78,20     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | 75-84                             | 6  | 1,00   | 73,25     |          |                         |       |
| <b>Marital Status</b>               | Never Married                     | 8  | 0,00   | 58,94     | 3,069    | 2                       | 0,381 |
|                                     | Married                           | 88 | 1,50   | 80,68     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | Widowed                           | 36 | 0,00   | 71,07     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | Divorced                          | 20 | 0,00   | 74,90     |          |                         |       |
| <b>Living Arrangement</b>           | Alone                             | 36 | 0,00   | 72,41     | 4,528    | 4                       | 0,339 |
|                                     | With Spouse Only                  | 22 | 2,00   | 80,03     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | With Children Only                | 81 | 0,00   | 69,97     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | With Spouse and Child/Children    | 5  | 0,00   | 59,50     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | With Relatives                    | 5  | 0,00   | 49,60     |          |                         |       |
| <b>Level of Monthly Income</b>      | 0 - 16.881TL                      | 20 | 1,00   | 76,10     | 0,693    | 2                       | 0,707 |
|                                     | 16.882 - 26.115 TL                | 46 | 0,00   | 72,52     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | 26.116 – 85.066 TL                | 86 | 1,00   | 78,72     |          |                         |       |
| <b>Social Security Registration</b> | None                              | 6  | 1,00   | 78,92     | 1,831    | 3                       | 0,608 |
|                                     | Retirement Fund                   | 74 | 0,50   | 76,86     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | Social Insurance Institution      | 60 | 0,00   | 73,05     |          |                         |       |
|                                     | Social Security for Self-Employed | 12 | 2,00   | 90,33     |          |                         |       |

|                                     |              |    |      |       |       |   |               |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----|------|-------|-------|---|---------------|
| <b>Health Status</b>                | Fair         | 62 | 1,00 | 79,73 | 6,157 | 2 | <b>0,046*</b> |
|                                     | Good         | 83 | 0,00 | 77,21 |       |   |               |
|                                     | Very Good    | 7  | 0,00 | 39,50 |       |   |               |
| <b>Frequency of Hospital Visits</b> | Never-Rarely | 38 | 0,00 | 70,99 | 3,348 | 2 | 0,187         |
|                                     | Occasionally | 95 | 0,00 | 75,67 |       |   |               |
|                                     | Frequently   | 19 | 2,00 | 91,66 |       |   |               |

\*: p<0,05 \*\*: p<0,01 \*\*\*: p<0,001

As can be observed above, there is no statistically significant difference, except for the variable of health status ( $\chi^2(2)=6,157$ ,  $p=0,046$ ). With the purpose of identifying the source of the difference in ageism scores between categories, pairwise comparisons were conducted with Bonferroni correction; and these revealed a statistically significant difference in ageism scores between those with “very good” health ( $Mdn=0,00$ ) and those with “fair” health ( $Mdn=1,00$ ; adj.  $p = 0.041$ ). This is to say that older adult participants with fair health status reported significantly higher level ageism scores compared to those with very good health status.

What do these two findings tell us in terms of inequalities among older adult participants in terms of functioning achievement and well-being in terms of being free from ageism?

First, starting with the variation, or inequality, in functioning achievement of being free from ageism, these two findings lead us to argue that there can be plausible empirical reasons to move beyond the conventional understandings of inequality and individuals’ well-being when the issue focused upon is ageism. First, there are descriptive variations in terms of functioning achievement of being free from ageism among the older adult population across their various characteristics in our case; however, these are not statistically significant variations. To illustrate, those who are male report more ageism experiences in comparison to female; or those who have monthly income above the starvation line report a higher level of ageism experience in comparison to those whose monthly income is below the starvation line. Yet, such descriptive variations are not statistically significant ones in this particular case, which leads us to consider that ageism can be such a prevalent social question that is one way or another experienced by our research’s older adult population in their everyday practices regardless of who they are. In other words, an interpersonal comparative evaluation of ageism experiences leads us to consider that any older adult may not be immune to the ageist practices that mostly reveal themselves in the forms of ambivalent benevolent prejudices. Thus, based on our data and analyses, if there is a form of equality achieved among older adults, this is perhaps the sort of equality in being subject to ageist practices in everyday practices of their own life.

Second, as can be seen from the analyses above, variables illustrating various forms of resource-ownership (such as regular income, perceived income adequacy, home ownership, level of monthly income, and social security registration) does not demonstrate a quality that leads to statistically significant variation in older adults' achievement of being free from ageism. This means that looking at individuals' achievement of being free from ageism by placing their resource-ownership at the centre of evaluation may not always be fully explanatory. Even though a significant portion of the broad literature on ageism (see Erol et al, 2025, p.19; Rippon et al, 2015, p.928; Rippon et al, 2014, p.381) posits that lower mean values of the ageism scale score among those whose economic status is higher, our data and analyses lead us to be suspicious that this is a generalizable finding. In other words, higher economic status may not always serve as a protective buffer zone against ageism. In fact, the tendency to connect economic status and material affluence with a reduction in discriminatory experiences stems from a utilitarian logic that is deeply embedded in orthodox economic theory. This utilitarian conception of the social actor as well as conventional economic understanding of people's well-being operate on the assumption of a linear or positive relationship between resource-ownership and individual's well-being, whereby a higher level of material ownership is believed to straightforwardly translate into a superior quality of life. However, this resource-centred conception has been increasingly criticized as an insufficient explanatory framework, particularly following the development of normative approaches advocating a more nuanced and advanced evaluation of the individual's well-being. Central to this critique, Amartya Sen's capability approach demonstrates that exclusive focus upon resource-ownership constitutes a form of "commodity fetishism" that overlooks the diverse restrictions, various constraints as well as disadvantages preventing individuals to achieve valuable beings and doings among which being free from ageism can be addressed. By shifting the evaluative focus from means of good living (e.g. various forms of resources) to actual ends of well-being (e.g. functioning achievement of being free from ageism), this perspective brings forth the need to extend our evaluation in a way moving beyond individuals' ownership of resources.

The fact that ageism scores in our particular data remain consistent regardless of what resources our participants possess leads us to underline resource-ownership (e.g. possessing certain rights, a decent level of income, and so forth) is necessary but insufficient condition on their own in achieving a particular functioning of being free from ageism. In this regard, the similarity in terms of the extent of ageism experiences between more affluent and less affluent older adult groups becomes theoretically accountable. However, relying on a conventional utilitarian conception

of well-being would leave this parity of experiences among economically diverse groups largely unexplained. Moving beyond the ownership-centred views, we can plausibly argue that higher levels of material assets may not always inherently result in superior quality of life compared to those with lower levels of material assets. This suggests that even when individuals possess significant means, they can still remain vulnerable to systemic ageism practices. Consequently, applying the capability approach's normative and theoretical frameworks to the findings above leads us to argue that there are good reasons to shift our analytical focus from a narrow economic conception of individuals' well-being to a more comprehensive sociological and political perspectives regarding what individuals can (not) achieve; and such a comprehensive perspective on ageism requires us to scrutinize the broader social structure, ageist stereotypes and a spectrum of cultural practices ranging from overt explicit hostility to paternalistic benevolence.

## Conclusion

The social reality is not unidimensional but multifaceted. This means that what we call reality is often not absolute since it changes according to the subjective positions of the actor/observer. Particularly in the framework of this research, this means that the issue of ageism and what we understand from it changes according to the epistemological position adopted in the researching process. When a research looks at it from the eye of a particular older adult population, which is the older people from the 60+ Tazelelenme University in this research, its various qualities appear differently from research investigating ageism from non-older adults' perspectives.

Adopting a critical epistemological position, this study addressed the gap within the existing scholarly literature on ageism in Türkiye that voices of older adults, their subjective perspectives as well as experiences are partially silenced and dominated by non-older adult populations' perspectives. By adopting Sen's capability approach that is normatively and theoretically compatible with this critical epistemological position, we have attempted to move beyond the research evaluating ageism from non-older adult participants' perspectives and aimed to involve a particular older adult population as active agents shaping our findings, discussion and thus understanding of ageism. Embracing such an epistemological position and applying Sen's capability approach as the normative and theoretical framework have provided us with three significant contributions that could have rarely been possible to observe in a resource-ownership centred research.

Firstly, our study that focuses upon a particular older adult population demonstrated that ageism can still remain a prevalent social phenomenon even in

cultural contexts where "respect for older adults" is a socially hegemonic value/norm. Especially the fact that the most prevalent forms of ageism in such contexts often manifest through benevolent practices of others (e.g. age-based mockery, behaviours derived from assumptions of cognitive and hearing impairments of all older adults) demonstrates that age-based discriminations are not merely a product of hostile intents but are frequently embedded in patronizing and ambivalent paternalistic forms that place older adults in an inferior social position.

Secondly, our analyses revealed that ageism experiences in this particular group of older adult population is surprisingly egalitarian across diverse social characteristics. The absence of statistically significant variation in terms of achieving being free from ageism among our participants who have diverse social characteristics (in terms of their gender, marital status, age-cohort, income, and so forth) suggests that the primary shared quality of the older adult population can perhaps be addressed as their collective vulnerability to the age-based discriminatory practices. This means that if we talk about equality among older adults, this is unfortunately the existence of equality in being subject to ageism.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly for the existing theory and future social policies, our research points out the significance of moving beyond the resource-ownership focused perspectives in evaluating older adults' well-being considered in relation to ageism. Challenging the orthodox economic perspectives of individual's well-being, our research, in evaluating older adults' well-being, suggests avoiding the "commodity fetishism" that is commonly observed in the utilitarian normative philosophical conception of the good life. Especially the finding demonstrating that variables regarding ownership of certain forms of resources, including social security registration, existence of regular income, income variance, and home ownership, do not in all cases reliably predict an older adult's achievement of being free from ageism. Even though nearly half our participants lived below the official starvation line, those with higher levels of income were not capable to avoid ageism either. Thus, looking at ageism from the normative and theoretical perspective of the capability approach involves a potential to reveal a distinctive insight concerning ageism and older adults' well-being that resource-ownership centred perspectives would have failed to capture.

Methodologically speaking, our findings suggest that the epistemological position and theoretical framework adopted by a researcher can fundamentally reshape both the conception and thus conceptualization of a phenomenon. Therefore, considering the existing characteristics of the ageism literature in Türkiye, we would like to address the need for a more rigorous sociological inquiries that prioritize the agency of older adults in ageism research.

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