Against the old?: A critical discourse analysis of Philippine online news articles' ageist ideologies

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Abstract

Aging is a natural phenomenon that every living being experiences; however, stereotypes against the process of aging and the elderly have been present in the media. These stereotypes may lead to ageist assumptions that marginalize the seniority. As such, as a starting point to examine ageism in the Philippine context, an in-depth textual analysis was done to examine 30 online news articles using Fairclough's (1995a) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. In describing the language used in Philippine news discourse on elderly people, van Leeuwen's (1996; 2008) role allocation and C.H. Chen's (2015) referential strategies were employed. Results revealed that the Filipino elderly occupied roles that were both passive and active. Moreover, all referential strategies, broadly *generization* and *identification*, were present in the news articles. However, findings further revealed that *othering*, a referential strategy exclusive in the Philippine context, emerged. Consequently, the linguistic analysis implied five characteristics ascribed to the Filipino elderly: (1) physically and mentally weak; (2) vulnerable and susceptible to be victims of crimes and accidents; (3) incompetent; (4) dependent; and (5) impoverished. Finally, to broaden the knowledge on Philippine ageism, this study encourages future research to expand the corpus and to examine the ageless discourse and its connection to Filipinos' perception on aging and ageism.

Keywords: Ageism, critical discourse analysis, the elderly, Philippine news discourse, referential strategies, role allocation

1.　　Introduction

Aging is a biological process innate to any living being, which has become overly naturalized in society. However, this phenomenon has created the notion that getting old equates to mental and physical decline; hence, concepts as regards aging may have an underlying

prejudice against the elderly, resulting in ageist assumptions. In the language of ageism, ageist assumptions are the negative stereotypes ascribed to aging and old people that are often damaging, yet covert (Gendron, Welleford, Inker, & White, 2016).

Ageism in the west started from the *denial of aging* (Bultena & Powers, 1978) and the rise of agelessness that would be associated to *successful aging* (Andrews, 1999; Ekerdt, 1986; Laslett, 1989) to the *unwatchability of aging* (Woodward, 1991). As such, these beliefs about aging have become a damaging occurrence in a sense that there is a rising number of people who fear old age (*gerontophobics*) or those who glorify youthfulness, creating stigma toward the elderly (Hillier & Barrow, 2015). On the other hand, ageism in the eastern societies may be opaquer than in the west because it is in the culture of the former to practice filial piety, which refers to respect for older people and the obligation to take care of them (C.H. Chen, 2015). Despite this cultural belief, aging is still perceived to be negative (Y.R. Chen, 2002, as cited in C.H. Chen, 2015).

In the Philippines, like its neighboring Asian countries, people share the notion of filial piety. Badana and Andel (2017) posit that in the Filipino culture, old age is perceived to be related to familial roles and social ties. As such, Filipinos are automatically involved in informal caregiving for older family members. Moreover, perceptions on aging in the Philippine context are both deemed to be negative and positive. Valdez, Angeles, Pareja-Corpus, and Hernandez (2013) assume that while Filipinos acknowledge the physical vulnerabilities that come with aging, the negative perceptions toward old age remains to be accepted because senior citizens in the Philippines receive social support from their families. However, the view on frailty as analogous to old age remains to be a 'naturalized' stereotype in the country. Esteban (2015) observes that some Filipino elderly accept the reality of aging, while they remain to be in denial by saying, *bata pa* (still young). He further explains that some old people, who cannot really accept old age, detest physical decline. With these growing negative perceptions and ambivalence regarding aging from Filipinos, examining the current state of the discourse on aging and how media portray Filipino senior citizens is significant in understanding and unmasking ageist ideologies in news articles that continue to be naturalized in society. Consequently, the present study raises awareness on ageist assumptions that could potentially prejudice the Filipino elderly.

1.1   Literature Review

According to Hooyman and Kiyak, (2009), gerontologists are those who study the "biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging" (p. 3).There are four processes in which aging occurs: (1) *chronological*: it is where aging is viewed only in numbers or the age of the person per se; (2) *biological*: this involves changes that occur physically, and as one ages, cells in the body cease to replicate;(3) *psychological*: this includes changes in the mental functioning of a person; and (4) *social*: it refers to the shift from societal to familial roles as one grows older. Based on these descriptions, it can be deduced that aging involves changes, and most of the time, these changes lean on the decline of all aspects in a person's life. Hence, a majority would associate aging to being slow, a notion, which

according to Magtubo (2017), creates 'silent damage' to the elderly and becomes overly naturalized or deeply embedded in society.

Apart from Hooyman and Kiyak's (2009) description of the processes of aging, chronologically speaking, some western contexts consider 65-year-olds and above as senior members of society (Hillier & Barrow, 2015). Moreover, Moody and Sasser (2015) further distinguished the elderly as *preretirees* (ages 55 to 64), *the young-old* (ages 65 to 74), and *the old-old* (ages 75 and above). However, in Asia, the age brackets vary. In Japan, ages 65 to 74 are considered pre-old, and seniority starts at the age of 75 (How old is old?, 2017). On the other hand, in the Philippines, even though the retirement age can be lowered to 56 years old based on a recently proposed bill (Cervantes, 2018), being 60 years old marks the onset of becoming a senior citizen (Cruz, Natividad, Gonzales, & Saito, 2016; L.J. Domingo, Medina, & M.F.A. Domingo, 1994).

1.1.1   Stereotypes of Aging

The concept of old age could elicit negative and positive stereotypes. Early gerontologists, such as Tuckman and Lorge (1953), noted that old age is perceived to be the *rocking-chair types* in which old people start to become a burden to society. Additionally, Palmore (2001) provided a summary of the common negative stereotypes linked to old age: (1) illness, (2) impotency, (3) ugliness, (4) mental decline, (5) mental illness, (6) uselessness, (7) isolation, (8) poverty, and (9) depression (moody). All these negative perceptions on aging may also lead to what Kalish (1979) and Estes (1979), and Binstock (1983) called as *new ageism* and *compassionate stereotyping*, respectively, where older people are depicted to be in need of help and support from others. While the act of helping seems to be a positive attitude, it can likewise be a disadvantage because it further perpetuates, although opaquely, the idea that the elderly are the dependent sector of society.

Positive stereotypes related to the aged are often attributed to those who are called *golden agers* (Hillier & Barrow, 2015) or those who are deemed to be beyond their incapacities. Old people who seem to exhibit extraordinary abilities, such as being physically lively and intellectually capable, are perceived to be praiseworthy, because most have the traditional notion on aging that skews to the negative process of deterioration. Thus, despite these positive views on aging, there remains an underlying negativity to it in a sense that *golden agers* are believed to be rare, implying that old age would likely result in decline.

The aforementioned stereotypes on aging are believed to entail a major challenge. In the field of medicine, Hillier and Barrow (2015) referred to this challenge as the *biomedicalization of aging*. There have been advancements in medicine, as well as scientific inquiries, under the notion that aging comes with biological deterioration. Another instance is that rehabilitation professionals are more concerned with and aware of healthcare programs provided to the elderly (Lewis, 1996); hence, these problems of aging further imply the need for medical aid and the decline in the health of the aged.

Taken together, these combined positive and negative stereotypes often result in an *affirmative action*, a procedure that seeks to eradicate forms of discrimination by creating

'special rights' for the marginalized (Sowell, 2004). Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen (2006) observed that this affirmative action has been a controversial topic among social scientists. They noted that such an action occurs when groups or organizations decide to allocate resources to the disenfranchised in order to eliminate inequality. However, its critics argued that affirmative action defeats its purpose to eradicate discrimination because it only intensifies stereotypes on the receivers of affirmative-action programs (Sowell, 2004; Zelnick, 1996). While affirmative action remains as a debatable theory and practice, it could be a silent tool for propagating stereotypes in society. In connection to aging, there have been more programs allotted to the elderly sector, as they are the ones who are viewed to be in need (Lewis, 1996; Novak, 2009).

1.1.2   Culture and Aging

Despite the pessimistic view on aging, Sokolovsky (1990) disputed that old people have a great influence on humankind; they are "a vital link in the transmission of our socially learned systems of belief and behavior which imbue children with the essence of humanity" (p.1). He added that cultures of the past had immense respect for the aged; however, in more recent times, western cultures started to deviate from this traditional notion, unlike Asians who remained to have *filial devotion*. However, even though eastern cultures are deemed to be pro-old, such a practice may be a form of *new ageism* (Estes, 1979;Kalish, 1979) and/or *compassionate stereotyping* (Binstock, 1983). Asians are believed to prioritize the welfare of old people (Vauclair, Hanke, Huang, & Abrams, 2017). Taking care of the elderly is a role assumed by the family and society, but it emphasizes an underlying ideology that old people tend to be dependent as they grow old. Thus, recent perceptions on aging among Asians, specifically to some Taiwanese youth, consider the elderly to have mood swings (C.H. Chen, 2015). Studies on perceptions on aging in eastern societies (Y.R. Chen, 2002, as cited in C.H. Chen, 2015; Hung, 1997; Lin, 1993) are also gradually shifting views despite their practice of filial piety. Thus, even though old people were highly regarded in the past, regardless of filial piety, they are slowly becoming the object of prejudice.

1.1.3   Aging, Media Discourse, and Lexical Choices

One of the possible factors influencing the gradual shift of perception on aging is media where language can be used to instill beliefs. Nuessel (1982) posited that the media have negatively depicted the elderly through ageist lexical choices such as *geezer, cranky, decrepit,* and *hag.* He also added that television shows depict old people in form of ageist paralinguistic and kinesic traits such as prosody, intonation, and gestures. Similarly, Hillier and Barrow (2015) pointed out that media have a strong impact to society because of instances of *reversed stereotyping of aging*, which depict old people in comedic roles and dialogues such as driving race cars. Consequently, these entail that such characterizations are rare for the seniority, and media assume that this could be a laughing matter. On the other hand, Hillier and Barrow (2015) also mentioned the term *sageism,* which is sexism

and ageism in one form, where old females are constantly underrepresented in the media. As a result, advertisements would encourage the patronization of products and services that promise agelessness (Hillier & Barrow, 2015). The language used in advertisements on new technologies that aim to fight old age are focused on combating the inevitability of having wrinkled skin. In a more recent study by Ellison (2014), it was found that the beauty industry invests in anti-aging products to cease or, at least, delay the manifestation of aging on skin; hence, advertisements employ the ageless discourse. The ageless discourse strategies used by advertisements do not only target old women but all old people as well. In a study of Low and Dupuis-Blanchard (2013) on how the elderly are portrayed in media, it was revealed that Canadian magazines advertise positive aging by placing pictures of old men and women who use anti-aging products such as night creams to achieve youthful beauty, and dental implants to let older adults kiss again. Moreover, Coupland (2007) pointed out that lexical choices found in magazine advertisements would often have formulas, treatments, and serums to defy aging, which imply that there is a sense of undesirability of the aging physical self. For these reasons, there may be an increase in *gerontophobes* or people who fear the process of aging, creating stigma not just toward growing old per se, but also against the elderly (Hillier & Barrow, 2015). Finally, C.H. Chen (2015) also argued that media, in the form of newspapers, influence the perpetuation of ideologies and the formation of attitudes toward a certain issue. He added that news articles could then shape views on aging by lexical roles ascribed to old people. Thus, newspapers are powerful tools that may breed, naturally and opaquely, -*isms*, particularly ageism.

Gibb and Holroyd (1996) conducted a study on Hong Kong newspapers, which revealed that the elderly are often reported to be in specific topics about victims of crimes and accidents, healthcare services, and financial challenges. Similarly, Murphy (2004) examined Irish newspapers and found that the aged are associated with weakness, dependence, and incompetence. Moreover, in an analysis of Irish newspapers conducted by Fealy, McNamara, Treacy, and Lyons (2012), the five types of subject positions ascribed to the elderly were identified: victims, frail, infirm and vulnerable, radicalized citizens, and deserving old and undeserving old. All these ascriptions position the elderly as an unproductive sector of society.

Bonnesen and Burgess (2004) revealed that American newspapers report the elderly in specific topics that deal with cognitive impairment and functional incompetence. Moreover, they found that while these are negative stereotypes, aging has been socially accepted because physical and mental decline are all-natural consequences of aging. However, these accepted negative perceptions on aging may foster covert ageist ideologies. Austrian newspapers, on the other hand, further perpetuate covert ageism by using a passive discourse where the elderly are opaquely seen in three ways: (1) they are collectivized; (2) they are passive receivers; and (3) they are considered to be a burden to society (Weicht, 2013). Thus, Austrian news discourse may be silently influencing the establishment of ageism.

Conversely, Koskinen, Salminen, and Leino-Kilpi (2014) described that the elderly are more positively viewed in Finnish newspapers. They revealed that the attitudes toward old people include *being looked for*, *being engaged with*, and *being advocated for*. However,

it could be inferred that these positive findings could indicate an underlying ageist ideology in the articles; that is, the elderly are still collectivized to be a sector which is almost always in need to be taken care of.

In the context of Taiwanese newspapers, C.H. Chen (2015) found out that news articles both portray the elderly as passive and active agents where they are shown either as victims of crimes, accidents, and illnesses, or as receivers of healthcare programs. Moreover, he added that news involving *golden agers* often receive excessive praise because the elderly are depicted to be beyond the incapacity of a 'socially normal' old person. Overall, newspapers could instigate ageist ideologies.

1.1.4   Prejudice Against the Elderly

Two elements are involved with respect to ageism—prejudice and age. Ageism may affect any age group where Bytheway (1995) posited that both young (i.e., children) and old people (i.e., elderly) are perceived to be incapable of doing certain actions. However, because there has been a pursuit of agelessness (Andrews, 1999; Ekerdt, 1986; Laslett, 1989), Bytheway and Johnson (1990) asserted that a working definition of ageism (1) relates to the process of aging (*chronological aging*), which creates fear and stereotypes on growing old; and (2) legitimizes the use of age as a measure of one's capability, which could lead to the deprivation of certain rights. Moreover, an earlier definition of ageism was coined by Butler (1975) who noted that it is "a process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old" (p. 12). Thus, ageism focalizes senescence as a period of deterioration.

Bultena and Powers (1978) conducted a ten-year longitudinal study, which revealed that participants aged 70 years old and above, would rather address themselves as middle-aged*,* and would rather evaluate and correlate themselves by reminiscing their younger selves. This perception leads to what is called as *denial of aging*. Consequently, when one is in denial of aging, there is the pursuit of *agelessness*—anti-aging methods and elixirs (Andrews, 1999; Ekerdt, 1986; Laslett, 1989). In an earlier account by Knopf (1975), he implied that *successful aging* or agelessness relates to conquering the repercussions of aging to one's health, such as vision and hearing impairment. In another study, Kaufman (1986) interviewed 60 old people and found that they build an *ageless identity* by associating their present lives to their meaningful past experiences. The constant longing for agelessness results in what Woodward (1991) termed as the *unwatchability of old age*; that is, aging must be kept hidden.

1.1.5   Homogenization of the Elderly

Ageism may foster homogenous stereotypes against the process of aging. As such, people are obscurely instilled with the fact that the elderly are vulnerable and incompetent, which hardly sees old people as individuals---who are continued to be *othered*. C.H. Chen (2015) revealed that *generization* strategy works by collectively categorizing all old people in a particular

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disposition, leading to a collectivized societal view. Consequently, *identification,* another strategy, takes place by specifying stereotypical roles in society assumed by the elderly. This is when homogenization or *generization* becomes tied to the roles allocated to old people: whether they are passive or active agents.

1.1.6   Aging and Ageism in the Philippines

In the Philippines, people aged 60 and above are considered to be members of the aging population (L.J. Domingo et al., 1994). It is the age bracket when they receive benefits from the government. Furthermore, in a traditional sense, Filipinos have high respect toward the elderly, for, as pruned by their experiences, the elderly are believed to be wiser. As such, they are viewed as authority figures, and a major influence in family decision-making agenda (L.J. Domingo et al.,1994). Likewise, it can be deduced that Filipinos practice filial piety, which is reflected in the Family Code of the Philippine Constitution where Article XV Section 4 states that: "the family has the duty to care for its elderly members..." These reasons result in positive stereotyping with respect to aging. In contrast, some western countries, such as the United States of America and England, do not have laws that particularly state the direct involvement of the family in taking care of elderly members (Age UK, 2014; Russo, 2013); instead, old people are sent to homes for the aged. However, despite the high regard Filipino families have for the elderly, there is a growing number of cases of ageism, particularly in the workplace (Magtubo, 2017; Palabrica, 2016). While ageism in the Philippine context is yet to be examined and be made known, it continues to persist because of stereotypes related to aging.

Most of the ageist assumptions in the Philippines are in the form of Binstock's (1983) *compassionate stereotyping.* A case in point is the study conducted by Cruz et al. (2016) where it was found that most elderly participants would need medical care, for they experienced pain and depression, poor vision and hearing, among others. Thus, the Filipino elderly are collectively seen to be medically poor, which perpetuates feelings of compassion and amplifies the belief that aging equates to deterioration. For these reasons, affirmative-action programs for the elderly have been resourced by a number of organizations in the Philippines in compliance with the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010. However, these programs may also have unintended consequences (Crosby et al., 2006), promoting inequality in a sense that the disenfranchised are pitied; hence, it could strengthen the divide between the superior and the inferior. As discussed earlier, the elderly in the Philippines receive benefits from the government and are prioritized in most instances. While these are acts of helping the seniority, they do not take away the fact that the compassion felt toward them is rooted in the belief that they are the weak sector of society. Also, they may continue to naturalize ageist ideologies. In the Philippines, the government implements Republic Acts and provides benefits to the elderly sector. Aside from the nation-wide benefits mandated by Republic Act No. 9994, an act to maximize the contribution of senior citizens to nation, grant benefits and special privileges and for other purposes (Official Gazette, 2010), different cities in Metro Manila have ordinances that give more privileges and benefits to the elderly

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(Purnell, 2019). For instance, Marikina City has Ordinance No. 26, series of 2016 (Marikina City Government, 2016), while Quezon City has Ordinance SP No. 2949, series of 2016 (Quezon City Council, 2016) that provides free parking, free medical and dental services, birthday cash gift, and the like to the elderly.

The Republic Acts and the local government ordinances that provide benefits to senior citizens are a form of affirmative action, which may be a boon or a bane. For one, being of aid to the seniority has been an automatic action of different societies in the world; however, it may further solidify the elderly's societal status, creating and promoting opaque ageist ideologies. Consequently, the more ageist perceptions created, the more that the old people are collectivized, which C.H. Chen (2015) describes as *homogenization*.

1.1.6.1   Filipinos and *Gerontophobia*

Dancel (2016) reported that Filipinos are obsessed with beauty where a youthful look is considered to be one of the standards in assessing someone's physical appearance. As such, most Filipinos are in constant pursuit of agelessness, which, in turn, results in the discrimination of old people because they may not meet the beauty standards that most Filipinos aspire to possess.

Gerontophobia does not stop with beauty because it also affects other aspects of life among Filipinos. Javier, Conchada, and Jabar (2019) emphasized that there is fear of aging among pre-retirees, for they believe that health starts to deteriorate and that they would not have the means to pay for health bills. From here, it can be inferred that there is already the stigma that old age equates to poor health; thus, pre-retirees dread the quality of life they would have once they reach seniority. Similarly, Badana and Andel (2018) posited that while some Filipino senior citizens are reported to be satisfied with old age because of their acquired dignity and maturity, most of them still feel that they are socially and financially discriminated or disadvantaged. On the other hand, Badana and Andel (2018) added that some Filipino elderly would perceive old age as an advantage because of the social services and care they receive from the government and from their families, respectively. While this perception appears to be positive, the underlying negative belief that old people are dependent becomes an apparent ageist ideology. Magtubo (2017) averred that even among Filipino seniors, ageism exists because they start to care less for themselves, believing that they are a burden to their families and to society in general.

Esteban (2015) interviewed 30 Filipino elderly from Marikina City, the Philippines, and found two major perceptions on aging: continuity—*tulad ng dati* (like before) and discontinuity—*di tulad ng dati* (unlike before). The former implies that there is the denial of aging and the idea of an ageless self because even if they claimed to accept aging, the respondents were rather narrating accounts of youthful strength; on the other hand, the latter is negative where they can and cannot accept aging because of their declining physical and mental conditions such as *paguulyanin* (dementia) and *malimutin* (forgetfulness) (Esteban, 2015). The language used by the Filipino senior citizens would indicate ambivalence, which implies that there is a naturalized stigma toward aging.

1.1.6.2   Filipino Elderly and the Philippine Media

News is an effective tool to propagate ideologies, but the portrayal and the language used to address the Filipino elderly in Philippine news discourse remain to be unexplored. However, ageism in the country can be traced in other forms of media such as television shows where old people become sources of laughter and entertainment. Dementia and senior citizens who fail to acclimate to modern times are often the subjects of Philippine comedic shows (Magtubo, 2017). In Hillier and Barrow's (2015) study, it was found that the depiction of the elderly in television shows results in *reversed age stereotyping.* As such, ageism becomes opaquer because old age becomes part of a funny storyboard.

Overall, the aforementioned studies indicate that there is still the need to further address ageism in other contexts. In the Philippines, ageism is a fertile topic to be discussed; thus, issues regarding stereotypes against aging and the homogenization of the elderly, if there are, remain untouched in the field. Also, further analysis on the linguistic features addressing the elderly in other forms of media, such as Philippine news sites, may effectively identify whether ageism is existent in the Philippine context. Thus, this study could unmask ageist assumptions in the Philippines and address the covert marginalization of Filipino senior citizens.

1.2   Research Questions

The lexical choices in portraying old people play a great role in empowering or disempowering the Filipino elderly. The ageist language, whether directly or indirectly stated, displaces the aged in society, which may result in the underrepresentation of Filipino senior citizens as well as the acquisition of a maligned view about the elderly and the process of aging. Hence, the primary objective of this paper was to examine ageism in the Philippine context by analyzing and describing the language used to ascribe characteristics and roles to the Filipino elderly. Moreover, it investigated the ageist ideologies found in online news articles from three leading news outlets: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *The Manila Bulletin*, and *Philippine Star*. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

How do the lexical choices and semantic roles influence the characteristics ascribed to the Filipino elderly?

   a.   What are the roles allocated to the Filipino elderly in the news articles?
   b.   What referential strategies are present in these news articles?
   c.   What are the dominant characteristics ascribed to the Filipino elderly in these articles?

1.3   Theoretical Framework

Previous studies dealing with ageism (C.H. Chen, 2015; Fealy et al., 2012; Gendron, Inker, & Welleford, 2018) used critical discourse analysis (CDA) in examining the inequalities and ageist ideologies embedded in various texts. Hence, this paper analyzed Philippine media, particularly online news articles, using Fairclough's (1995a) CDA framework to delve into the referential strategies and roles allocated to old people by which lexical choices and semantic roles, particularly the nouns, adjectives, and verbs used, reflect the way the elderly are positioned in society.

1.3.1   Referential Strategies

This paper adapted C.H. Chen's (2015) theory that news employs strategies which imply discrimination against the elderly. Consequently, these strategies pave the way for negative characteristics ascribed to the elderly, which are often associated to physical and mental decline. These strategies can be broadly classified into two: g*enerization* and *identification*; but C.H. Chen (2015) further divided these into four different referential strategies used in news articles, capturing the ageist ideologies they embed:

A. Generization:
   1. *Older People Generalized and Classified* - Old people are collectivized, triggering homogenization.

B. Identification:
   2. *Relational Identification and Family-centered Subject Positions* - Old people are portrayed within social networks limited to the family.
   3. *Age Identification* - An elderly person's age may be disclosed under either two circumstances:
      a. *Older Age as Legitimizing Physical Decline* - Age disclosure is used to contextualize elaboration of an elderly person's weakness (i.e., illnesses and accidents).
      b. *Advanced-age Disclosure and Counter-stereotypical Portrayals* - Age disclosure is used to contextualize elaboration of an elderly person's achievements or extraordinary strength despite his or her age.
   4. *Nomination* - Old people are identified using names that imply their societal role(s).

1.3.2   Role Allocation

Role allocation aids in identifying and exploring the social roles represented by social actors (van Leeuwen, 1996; 2008). This theory also posits that social actors could either be active or passive agents, depending on the way the actors are represented in a text through verb choices and semantic roles. van Leeuwen (1996; 2008) divided role allocation into two: *passivation* and *activation*.

Passivation can be further narrowed down into two: *subjected*, when actors are treated as objects; and *beneficialized*, when actors are considered as a third party or the receiving end (van Leeuwen, 1996; 2008). Apart from the passive structure, passivation also includes semantic roles that merely place the subject as "undergoing an externally actuated process" (C.H. Chen, 2015, p.76). It should be noted that this paper on ageism only focused on the *beneficialized* type of passivation (e.g., The elderly was *granted* with...) because *subjected* is used in the study of sexism. Activation, on the other hand, pertains to instances when an old person is the doer of an action in relation to the verb used (e.g., The elderly slowly *climbed*...). In the context of ageism, these allocations reveal the way the elderly are portrayed in society.

1.3.3   Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) explores language use and its connection to unequal relations of power because language is a part of society, a social process, and a socially conditioned process (Fairclough, 1995a; 2001). Fairclough claims that language use depends on social conventions (*linguistic phenomena*). For instance, one's register changes depending on the context, e.g., in a public or an intimate space. On the other hand, he further asserts that language is not solely a reflection of society; rather, society could be dictated by language, too (*social phenomena*). As such, it can be deduced that language and society influence each other. Consequently, Fairclough's (1995a) CDA framework provides a three-dimensional point-of-view of a topic being analyzed, which may be effective in unmasking inequality in society (Gendron et al., 2018). In this research, the language use in the news articles potentially shapes the way society perceives aging and old people; thus, news discourse becomes effective in perpetuating ageist ideologies.
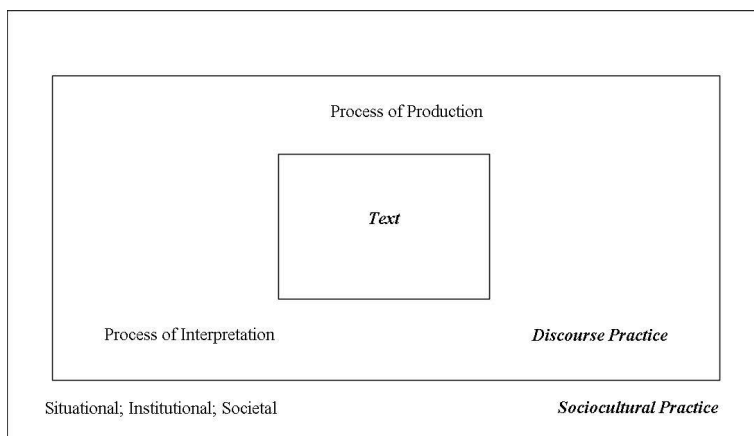

Figure 1. *Dimensions of Discourse Analysis as Adapted from Fairclough (1995a)*

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Figure 1 revisits Fairclough's (1995a) CDA model. The *text* is a product and a resource for interpretation. Through *description* (textual analysis), one could determine the linguistic features found in the text. Under *discourse practice,* these features will undergo *interpretation* (processing analysis) where it will determine the social conventions in which the text is used. Finally, the *sociocultural practice* is the *explanation* (social analysis) dimension where the type of discourse colonizes public institutions. In this study, the text analyzed was online news articles in which the linguistic features, particularly the lexical choices and semantic roles, determined the discourse practice of Philippine news writing that reports on the elderly. Finally, the social analysis would reveal the ageist ideologies embedded in the text, eventually influencing Filipinos' perception on aging and old people.

1.3.3.1 Media and Discourse

Media have the power to shape people and society. Fairclough (1995b) posits that media propagate ideologies by representing the world in constructing social identity and social relations. Consequently, ideologies become implicitly naturalized in society. In relation to the analysis of news media, he points out that the discourse of news reports is a tool that can control masses. He further argues that news depicts reality, which is dependent on social positions and on those who produce such a discourse. Through CDA, naturalized ideologies embedded in the texts analyzed could be unmasked.

2.   Method

2.1   Research Design

The study employed an in-depth qualitative analysis, particularly textual analysis. The description of linguistic features that helped reveal the characteristics ascribed to the elderly and the ageist ideologies perpetuated in the online news articles accounted for the qualitative data.

2.2   Sources of Data

This study gathered 30 online news articles from the three leading Philippine broadsheets in terms of readership and yearly sales, which also maintain their respective websites: *Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Manila Bulletin,* and *Philippine Star* (Nielsen Philippines, 2015; Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2013; EON Philippine Trust Index [PTI], 2015) (see Appendix A). These news sites were selected for their wider reach; their readership extend to both online and non-online readers.

The selected articles were published from January to September 2018 because at the time the study was conducted, the researcher wanted to focus on the most recent news published in order to gather timely and relevant findings in the Philippine setting. Moreover,

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for the nine-month period, only 30 news articles were selected as these were the only ones that met the following selection criteria for the study corpus: (1) news articles (excluding editorials and lifestyle articles, among others); and (2) news focusing on the Filipino elderly (excluding those about old people of other nationalities). Consequently, both macro and micro news on the Filipino elderly were collected. In this paper, the former refers to news articles involving the elderly as a group (e.g., news on government support and programs for the Filipino elderly), whereas the latter pertains to news articles that address the elderly as individuals in special cases (e.g., news on crime talking about a Filipino elderly).

2.3   Data Analysis

Using Fairclough's (1995a) CDA model, each news article was thoroughly examined by looking into the linguistic features that address the Filipino elderly. The lexical choices and semantic roles, specifically the verbs, adjectives, and nouns used to report about the elderly in each news article, were selected to identify the referential strategies and the role allocation. It is important to note that all verbs, apart from the main clause, were selected and analyzed. Moreover, the analysis of passive sentences was not limited to passive verbs, but it also included semantic roles and other verb choices such as infinitive verbs, which make the elderly a passive agent. On the other hand, the active sentences examined adhered more to the classic usage of active agency where an agent is considered active as long as the subject is the doer of the action in relation to the verb used. These analyses then revealed the characteristics ascribed to the elderly and the ageist ideologies embedded in the news articles.

In order to guarantee a high degree of accuracy in analyzing the data, the intercoding process was done by assigning two independent coders who both have a master's degree in English and who are knowledgeable in the field of study, particularly in CDA coding. The intercoders have been teaching in the field for more than ten years and have a special interest in critical discourse analysis of societal issues. The entire data was subjected to the intercoding process where the intercoders were oriented regarding the framework for coding and were provided clear instructions on how to do the analysis. The researcher likewise conducted trial sessions with the intercoders prior to giving them two weeks to complete the given task independently. Afterward, a meeting was set with the two intercoders to analytically compare and discuss the similarities and differences in the coding. In cases where discrepancies occurred in the analysis, a thorough discussion among the coders was held by reanalyzing the questionable data until they arrived at a consensus as regards the results and interpretation of the said data.

3.   Findings and Discussion

This section of the paper answers the research questions. It is divided into three major parts: (1) the identification of the roles allocated to the Filipino elderly; (2) the referential strategies used in the news articles; and (3) the dominant characteristics ascribed to the Filipino elderly,

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which all lead to addressing the main question of this paper on the influence of lexical choices to the characteristics ascribed to the Filipino elderly.

3.1   Role Allocation

3.1.1   Passivation

The analysis of the articles revealed that the Filipino elderly is both portrayed in passive and active roles. The occurrences of passivation include lexical choices and semantic roles that involve external agents in the process such as the following verb choices: *assisted, provided, killed, exempted, supported, helped, shot, protected, scammed,* and *extorted.* On the other hand, activation involves verbs such as *broke, struggle, died,* and *fails*. These verbs imply that the elderly occupy roles associated with dependency, vulnerability, and decline.

> *Excerpt 1:* (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*)
> Poll watchers _assisted_ the elderly.

> *Excerpt 2:* (*Philippine Star*)
> Registered citizens are _entitled_ to _receive_ P6000…

> *Excerpt 3:* (*The Manila Bulletin*)
> Recognizing the need to _inform and keep_ the elderly connected to the modern world, the SM mall in this city _conducted_ last Wednesday a tech seminar for senior citizens.

The first two excerpts include the verb *assisted* and *entitled* and the infinitive verb *to receive*, which imply that the elderly depend on services and benefits from the government. Similarly, in C.H. Chen's (2015) study, government benefits and services were considered to be passivized occurrences. Excerpt 3, on the other hand, conveys the need to update the seniority when it comes to handling technology. The infinitive verbs *to inform* and *keep*, along with the verb *conducted*, imply the decline in the ability of the elderly to adapt to modernization, hence assuming the passive context of needing to be assisted. While the above excerpts may appear to be examples of affirmative action, they may, however, perpetuate ideas that relate to the deterioration of old people and the notion that the elderly eventually become a burden to society because of their dependent nature. Passivation may also trigger *compassionate stereotyping* against Filipino senior citizens.

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3.1.2   Activation

Excerpt 4: (Philippine Daily Inquirer)
...when they saw Lola Rosa <u>*collecting*</u> garbage

Excerpt 5: (Philippine Star)
Mr. Yang <u>*broke*</u> his hip a few years ago…

Excerpt 6: (Philippine Daily Inquirer)
Sale <u>*suffered*</u> a bullet wound…

Excerpts 4, 5, and 6 show old people as active agents. More often than not, the Filipino elderly is represented as doers in the contexts of poverty, health, and crime. Hence, this may result in negative stereotypes against aging and old Filipino people.

The roles allocated to the Filipino elderly, whether active or passive, may further marginalize the sector, for the roles they represent in the news articles analyzed create negative stereotypes toward aging and old people. Consequently, ageist ideologies that portray the elderly as victims and as individuals who need support are opaquely reinforced. Similarly, in previous studies (Fealy et al., 2012; Gibb & Holroyd, 1996; Murphy, 2004), old people are assigned to roles that depict them as victims of crimes and/or facing financial challenges.

3.2   Referential Strategies

The strategies used to homogenize and identify the Filipino elderly, as presented in the news articles, further revealed the contexts in which seniors are collectivized and/or classified according to their relationship with other people.

3.2.1   Older People Generalized and Classified

Excerpt 7: (Philippine Daily Inquirer)
…life is a struggle for elderly Filipinos in general…

Excerpt 8: (Philippine Star)
…some vulnerable sectors such as senior citizens…

Excerpt 9: (The Manila Bulletin)
Since the health expenses of seniors are generally more costly…

In the above excerpts, the use of the words *general* and *generally*, and the collectivization of the seniors under a negative light (i.e., *struggle, vulnerable, health expenses, more costly*) trigger the homogenized idea that old people are in an inescapable misery because of physical weakness. As a result, the assumption that the Filipino elderly are

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at a social disadvantage is further perpetuated. C.H. Chen (2015) argued that generecizing the elderly generates a naturalized stigma on the elderly where they are positioned to be burdens to society.

3.2.2 Relational Identification and Family-centered Subject Positions

Excerpt 10: (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*)
Senior citizens are being treated well by their <u>families</u>…

Excerpt 11: (*Philippine Star*)
Last September, a 67-year-old <u>widow</u> was shot in the back while on her way to mass.

In excerpts 10 and 11, the mention of *families* and *widow* presents the Filipino elderly in situations limited to familial positions and relationships. While this may be in connection with the Filipino culture of strong family ties and value for relationships, emphasizing these may entail that old people do not have a life outside the context of a family. In C.H. Chen's (2015) study, he found that the elderly are often centered in family positions, rather than social, which suggests that they have limited functions in society. In the same way, while the Philippines has the Anti-Age Discrimination Law in workplaces, ageism does not fail to marginalize the elderly. Medenilla (2017) reported an elderly who was discriminated from applying for a job because of his age. Thus, it can be observed that old people are still expected to stay at home than work, limiting their social functions.

Excerpt 12: (*Philippine Star*)
<u>Seafood importer</u> Kong Te Yang, 85, is the oldest in the Philippine squad which has an average age of 57.5 years. The other players are former Laura Ashley *chief executive* Viksi Egan, 74, *former Secretary General of the National Statistical Coordination Board* Romulo Virola, 71, *psychologist* Dr. Allen Tan, 71, Gemma Mariano-Tan, 64, *Pangasinan farmer* Alberto Quiogue, 61, Gerry Alquiros, 60…

Conversely, another instance in which the relational-identification strategy is used is when the subjects are positively stereotyped as *golden agers.* Excerpt 12 shows that Filipino elderly athletes are not confined in family-centered positions; instead, their occupations are mentioned. Hillier and Barrow (2015) posit that *golden agers* is a type of positive stereotyping in which old people who can perform actions atypical of their age are deemed to be out of the ordinary. Knopf (1975) coined this notion as *successful aging.* Hence, in relation to excerpt 12, the subjects are considered to be *golden agers* as justified by their social networks outside the family.

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3.2.3   Age Identification

Excerpt 13: (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*)
Carlos Sale, 69, was on his way home when he was shot dead…

Excerpt 14: (*Philippine Star*)
Numeriana Plaza, 76, can barely walk since her mild stroke three years ago.

Excerpt 15: (*The Manila Bulletin*)
A 61-year-old woman was killed.

Excerpt 16: (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*)
He is 82 years old and is one of the stars in a beauty pageant for elderly…

Age-identification strategy may be used to emphasize and justify the context of the news involving old people. Both excerpts 13 and 15 are crime-related news, while excerpt 14 presents a health issue. The contexts of excerpts 13, 14, and 15 present the elderly in vulnerable situations, and mentioning their age seems to be a justified understanding that old people are prone to health and crime issues. On the other hand, excerpt 16 discloses the age of the subject in order to portray a *successful ager*, or in other words, an elderly person who functions beyond his age. Hence, excerpt 16 has a covert negative stereotype that beauty stagnates because of old age.

Similarly, in C.H. Chen's (2015) study, it was found that the age of an old person is disclosed in two instances: (1) to legitimize physical decline, and (2) to disclose advanced age and counter stereotypical portrayals.

3.2.4   Nomination

Excerpt 17: (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*)
Eduardo, now 74, was confined overnight at a non-airconditioned ward for minor suture.

Excerpt 18: (*The Manila Bulletin*)
The fatality was identified as Lambaina Dagandal, 61…

Excerpt 19: (*Philippine Star*)
An octogenarian will compete in contract bridge for the Philippines…
Excerpt 20: (*Philippine Star*)
A centenarian received the surprise of her life…

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Nomination is observed in two ways. In excerpts 17 and 18, similar to excerpts 13 and 14, names are disclosed in instances of crime and health-related issues in which nomination functions as an emphasis on the gravity of a situation. Additionally, in excerpt 12, names are also fully disclosed, emphasizing the idea of honoring *successful agers*. In relation to this, according to C.H. Chen (2015), nomination highlights the situation of an old person to justify the context of the news.

Excerpts 19 and 20, on the other hand, are another form of nomination in which other names or references are given to a subject. *Octogenarian* and *centenarian* are nouns used to replace full names in order to emphasize the subjects' ages.

3.3   Othering

In this study, *othering* is observed to be a strategy exclusive in the news articles examined. The word *special* was an occurring adjective used in addressing issues involving the Filipino seniority, e.g., *special assistance, special registration, special class,* and *special medical intervention*. The adjective *special* may be positive; however, similar to the negative effect of affirmative action, labeling the elderly *special* may further marginalize the sector. In addition, the elderly as a *special sector* stems from issues relating to health; thus, it can be deduced that that old people are, again, portrayed to be the vulnerable sector.

3.4   Language Use and Characteristics Ascribed to Aging and the Elderly

Excerpt 21: (*Philippine Star*)
Numeriana Plaza, 76, can barely walk since her mild stroke three years ago.

Excerpt 22: (*The Manila Bulletin*)
For older people, bridge contributes to their cognitive reserve to stave off dementia in their later years.

Excerpt 23: (*Philippine Star*)
A 74-year-old man was shot by three men in front of his house…

Excerpt 24: (*The Manila Bulletin*)
…the event implemented in all SM Supermalls nationwide aims to upgrade the skills and knowledge of senior citizens.

Excerpt 25: (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*)
Poll watchers assisted the elderly…
Excerpt 26: (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*)
Manila Golden Gays sing for their supper

The above excerpts provide examples as to how the Filipino elderly are portrayed. It is also important to note that occurrences of positive statements, such as in excerpt 19, may be a case of *golden agers,* which may also perpetuate negative prejudice toward aging (Hillier & Barrow, 2015). Excerpts 21 and 22 both show the physical and mental deterioration that come with aging. The age-identification strategy found in excerpt 21 may also be a way of justifying the physical weakness of the subject. Similarly, in excerpt 23, the age of the subject was identified, which may be seen as a way of emphasizing the vulnerability of the victim. In excerpt 24, the elderly were collectively implied to be unskilled when it comes to understanding modern technology; hence, such a description may homogenize the Filipino elderly to be incompetent, especially in adapting to technological advancements. Excerpt 25 directly reveals a homogenized view on the dependency of the Filipino elderly. Moreover, most of the news reports that involve assistance to the Filipino elderly used the adjective *special*, which is an indirect form of *othering*. Finally, excerpt 25 would position old people in an impoverished situation.

The analysis of the language used in the news articles, along with the referential strategies and roles allocated to the Filipino elderly, implies characteristics that may create stereotypes against aging and the elderly. The five major characteristics ascribed to the elderly, as implied in the news articles and the aforementioned excerpts, include (1) physically and mentally weak, (2) vulnerable and susceptible to be victims of crimes and accidents, (3) incompetent, (4) dependent, and (5) impoverished. Consequently, these characteristics may reinforce prejudicial attitudes toward the process of aging and the elderly.

4.   Conclusion

This paper conducted a purely descriptive textual analysis of ageism in the Philippine context by examining online news articles published by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *The Manila Bulletin*, and *Philippine Star*. Using CDA, it was revealed that the elderly in the Philippines were both active and passive agents. As regards the former, most instances used verbs in the context of health and crimes, triggering negative stereotypes; whereas, as passive agents, the seniority were indirectly presented as dependent on services and support from their families and the government, implying *compassionate stereotyping*. Also, all referential strategies were present in the news articles. On the one hand, the Filipino elderly were collectivized and homogenized, resulting in hasty generalizations. On the other, the identification of social positions, ages, and names confined the elderly in familial positions instead of societal ones. Identification was also employed to prove the gravity of the context of the news involving old people. Furthermore, while positive, the referential strategies and roles allocated to Filipino *golden agers* also prove that *successful* aging is an extraordinary phenomenon, which could eventually elicit ageist assumptions.

Othering, another referential strategy, was exclusively observed in the articles examined, particularly in news dealing with government assistance and medical intervention for the seniority. Specifically, the word *special* was a common adjective used, which could

insinuate the Filipino seniority as the *othered*. It is also worth noting that the Filipino senior citizens were often grouped together with persons with disability (PWDs), a sector who is also othered in society. Thus, language becomes a tool to reinforce inequity and hegemony by othering people in society who are often homogenized and deemed to be weak and vulnerable.

Further, the findings revealed the five dominant attributes assigned to the Filipino elderly: physically and mentally weak in the context of healthcare; vulnerable and susceptible to be victims of crimes and accidents; incompetent in adapting to technological advancements and changing times; dependent in terms of being special and *othered*; and oftentimes impoverished or in a pitiable state. These findings further imply that there are covert ageist ideologies embedded in the news articles, which may create or maintain prejudicial assumptions toward aging. Likewise, based on the analysis, the Filipino elderly may tend to become victims of crimes because of the naturalized stereotype that old people are frail. Also, even though not evident in the news analyzed, young Filipino people may resort to elixirs that would defy aging as they deal with these ageist assumptions; thus, such raises concerns about what Hillier and Barrow (2015) coined as *gerontophobia* or the fear of aging.

The culture of respect for the elderly could make ageist assumptions constantly opaque and embedded in news discourse in the Philippine context. Hence, ageist ideologies in the Philippine society could become the crucial means in the shift from honoring old people to marginalizing Filipino senior citizens. In relation to this, C.H. Chen (2015) posits that the increase in negative perceptions toward aging and the elderly is ironic, for it may result in abandoning certain cultural values such as filial piety.

Ageist ideologies can cause harm to both young and old. It can even worsen the way old people view themselves because instead of keeping a positive attitude (Magtubo, 2017), they may acquire a *bahala na, matanda na* (let it be, I am old) attitude, doubting their self-worth. In turn, this affects the Filipino elderly's quality of life, for they become susceptible to mental-health issues brought about by negative stereotypes and assumptions taken against them (Magtubo, 2017).

In comparison to ageism in other Asian and Western contexts, the present research yielded some results that are consistent with those in previous studies, which suggest that old people are marginalized, advertently and inadvertently, because of the stereotypes and ageist assumptions attributed to them. It can also be observed that in the Philippine setting, negative characteristics are ascribed to the elderly, which originate from stereotypical assumptions. Positive stereotypes (e.g., "oldest but the best"), on the other hand, were only found in two micro news articles; and in reality, these stereotypes can breed negative assumptions because the statements focused on *golden agers* who are perceived to be beyond their incapacities. Hillier and Barrow (2015) and C.H. Chen (2015) both argue that positive stereotypes are rooted in negative beliefs surrounding aging.

The media could be an effective tool for perpetuating ideologies. In this light, the language used in Philippine news discourse involving the elderly was described to become a starting point to increase awareness on ageism. Hence, aside from examining the news, future research could explore and incorporate Filipinos' perceptions on aging and ageism by

conducting a survey or an interview among Filipinos from different age groups. This study also has a limited number of news articles examined; as such, future studies on this topic could expand the corpus and employ a diachronic approach to explicating ageism in news reports produced then and now. Finally, future studies may likewise focus on ageism in the Philippines as reflected in other forms of media along with the use of the ageless discourse and how it may influence anxieties related to old age.

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Appendix A
Sources of data

Online News Articles from the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

Title of Article	Date of Publication
Senior citizen overcharged by hospital for minor suture	January 8, 2018
Cops eye 'love triangle' in slay of Cainta senior citizen exec	February 16, 2018
PWDs, seniors struggle to vote in Manila	May 14, 2018
Elderly man with disability fails to vote in Bulacan	May 14, 2018
Cops should check houses for elder abuse, lawmaker says	June 18, 2018
COMELEC reminds seniors, PWDs: Declare status during registration	July 4, 2018
Manila's 'Golden Gays' sing for their supper	July 22, 2018
Pimentel: Exempt senior citizens from solo-riders ban on EDSA	August 16, 2018
Special registration for seniors, PWDs	September 4, 2018
Senior passengers to get perks from PAL on Sept. 9, 'Grandparents Day'	September 8, 2018

Online News Articles from *The Manila Bulletin*

Title of Article	Date of Publication
ERAP exempts Manila seniors from parking fees, color-coding	February 28, 2018
Senior citizens	March 14, 2018
2 poseurs victimize seniors	April 21, 2018
Identify yourself, Comelec tells PWDs, senior citizens	July 4, 2018
Bill increasing pension of qualified indigent senior citizens pushed	July 31, 2018
Elderly woman killed, 9 hurt in road mishap	August 15, 2018
Solon proposes travel tax exempt for seniors and PWDs	August 16, 2018
400 senior citizens get 'techie' at SM City	August 23, 2018
Special Comelec registration for PWDs, seniors set Sept 5.	September 3, 2018
Angara urges Congress to pass bill doubling pension for senior citizens	September 8, 2018

Online News Articles from *Philippine Star*

Title of Article	Date of Publication
Grandmother killed in Zamboanga del Sur over witchcraft rumors	January 26, 2018
Student held for rape try on grandma, 81	March 19, 2018
Mandaue City seniors get first tranche of cash aid	April 17, 2018
Seniors, PWDs brave heat, long queues to vote	May 16, 2018
National ID to be pilot-tested in select regions (sub section: Seniors to benefit)	August 11, 2018
Oldest athlete carries bridge hopes	August 19, 2018
Grandma, 103, gets birthday surprise from cops	August 20, 2018
P23 billion budget for indigent senior citizens' pension looms	August 24, 2018
PCSO cuts medical assistance budget	September 2, 2018
Special registration set for senior citizens, PWDs	September 4, 2018