Does Age-Related Knowledge Impact Ageist Attitudes?

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Introduction

- Ageism was first coined by Robert Butler, who described ageism as a form of discrimination along the veins of sexism and racism in their patterns.

- He further elaborated how ageism is described as the young and middle-aged's "personal revulsion to and distaste for growing old, disease, disability; and fear of powerlessness, 'uselessness,' and death" (Butler, 1969, p. 243).

- Students enrolled in an aging course emerged with a more positive attitude toward older people compared to those in an Introductory Psychology course (Cooney et al., 2020).

- Moreover, Lytle et al. (2020) found an improvement in ageist attitudes after showing participants 7 minutes of aging facts. This video debunked stereotypes and demonstrated that videos could be an accessible method of reducing discrimination.

- Our purpose is to study whether ageism interventions could use knowledge as a tool and how effective it is.

Hypothesis

We hypothesized that participants who are taught about aging would score lower on the Fabroni Scale of Ageism assessment compared to the group that does not learn about aging.

Methods

Participants:

- Convenience sampling through SONA Systems and social media to recruit 65 participants.

- Control group: $n = 34$; 8 men (23.5%), 25 women (73.5%), one non-binary (3%); Mean age = 22 (SD = 5.8).

- Experimental group: $n = 31$; 7 men (23%), 23 women (74%), and one non-binary (3%); Mean age = 25 (SD = 9.3).

Materials:

- Video created from material from the Palmore Facts on Aging Quiz

- Control video about an Albertan family (CTV News, 2016).

- The Palmore Facts on Aging Quiz (Pachana et al., 2012), 9–item multiple choice quiz.

- Fabroni Scale of Ageism, is a 29–item questionnaire answered with a 6-point Likert Scale (Kutlu et al., 2012). The alpha for this scale was .87.

Methods (cont.)

Procedure:

The Ageism Video Group watched a video containing Palmore's Facts on Aging, while the Non-Ageism Video Group watched an unrelated video about an Albertan family (CTV News, 2016).

Following the videos, both groups completed a 9–item Palmore Facts on Aging Quiz to test their knowledge and 29 items from the Fabroni Scale of Ageism. The 29 items assessed common attitudes about older people and were answered using a 6-point Likert Scale.

Results

We conducted an independent samples t-test with data of 65 participants. See Figure 1 for group means and standard deviations.

The Levene Test for Equality of Variances was performed, and no violations were found.

Participants took a quiz to assess their knowledge, which we found statistically significant $t(63) = -11.2$, $p = .001$, $r^2 = .66$ (large effect) between the Non-Ageism Video group and the Ageism Video group.

Using the Fabroni Scale of Ageism assessment, we determined that the attitudes of the experimental group did not have a statistically significant difference $t(63) = -0.70$, $p = .489$, $r^2 = .01$ (small effect) compared to the Non-Ageism Video group.

Figure 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of Quiz Scores and Fabroni Scale of Ageism Scores
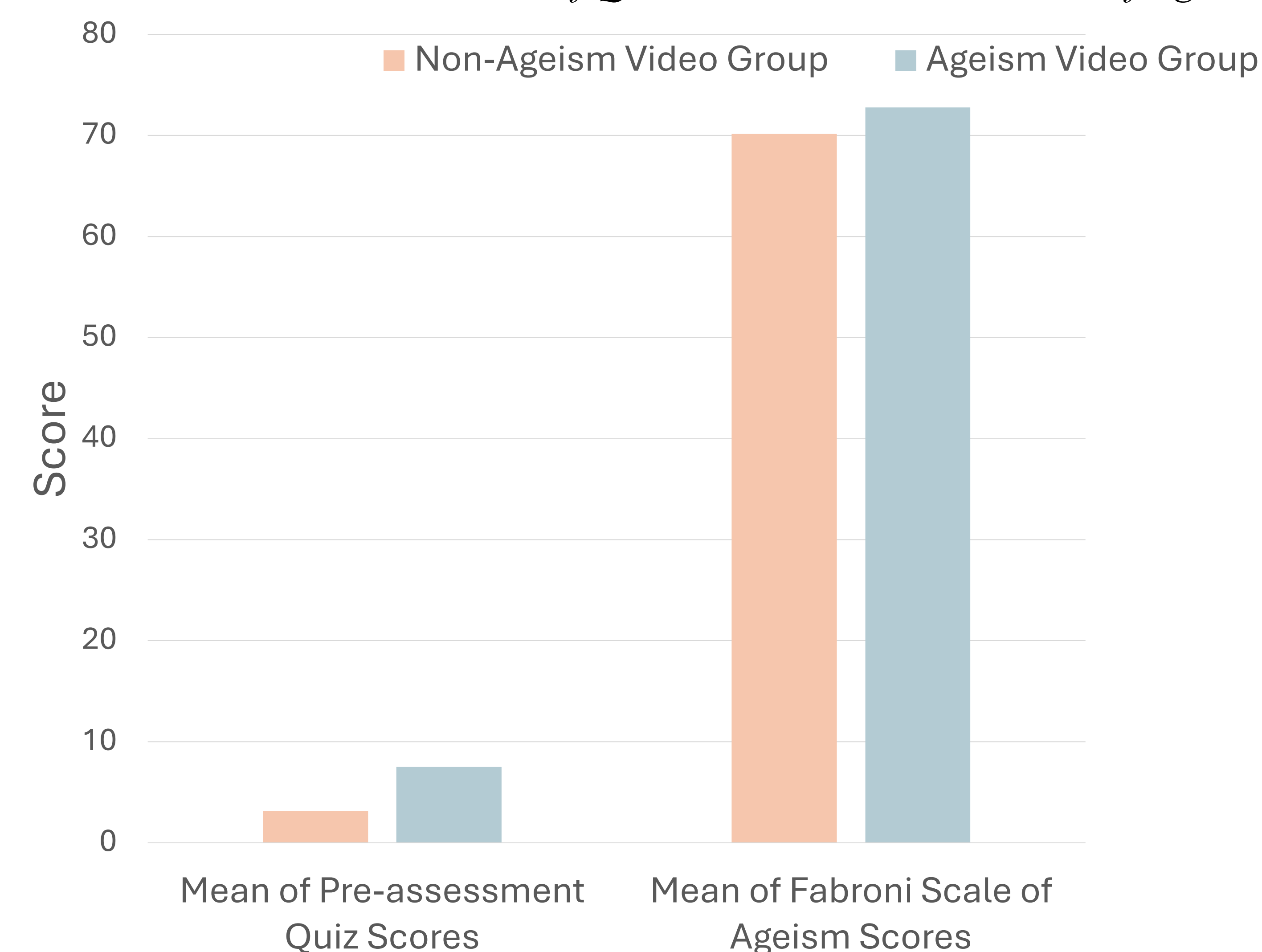
Discussion

As there was a significant difference in the quiz scores between groups, this supported our manipulation that the Ageism video group did have higher ageism knowledge.

However, our hypothesis that participants who were taught about aging would score lower on the Fabroni Scale of Ageism assessment compared to the group that did not learn about aging was not supported.

Our data did not replicate results from previous literature, such as the PEACE (Positive Education about Aging and Contact Experiences) Model developed by Sheri R. Levy (2016) and Lytle's (2020) study on reducing aging with brief videos.

Our video was only 2 minutes long, whereas Lytle's (2020) video was 7 minutes long, which could explain why it did not produce the same results regarding the participants' ageist attitudes.

This suggests that while the content of our video was able to inform them about age discrimination, knowledge alone is not sufficient to change one's attitude, and longer-term interventions may be a better solution to address such discrimination.

Limitations and Future Directions:

Small sample size and influence of external factors such as prior exposure to age-related education.

Self-report measures used may have introduced social desirability effects, which could impact the accuracy of assessing attitudes towards ageism.

Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term impact of knowledge on attitude change.

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