Systematic Literature Review On Ambivalent Representations Of Older Persons In The Media

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Owing to decreasing fertility and increasing longevity, population ageing rapidly spreads worldwide, and the media coverage of older persons correspondingly increases. There are both positive and negative depictions of older people in the media. This study investigates how older persons are ambivalently depicted in the media. According to the PRISMA statement, the required articles about media representations of older persons are selected in the Web of Science (WoS), the research database in this study. Through the analysis of themes included in the required articles, there are seven primary aspects reflecting ambivalent representations: (a)presence frequency; (b)physical features; (c)personality traits; (d)health conditions; (e)social engagement; (f)stereotypes; and (g)gender. It is found that the heterogeneity of older people, including older women and other older subgroups, should be objectively described in the media, not only some certain positive or negative features. Multilevel and diverse representations of older persons in the media may help the viewers think over the age stereotypes in their minds and change their perceptions of older persons, which might alleviate ageism across time. **Keywords:** older persons; negative; positive; media

I. INTRODUCTION

Owing to declining fertility rates and increasing longevity, population ageing is a significant worldwide trend (United Nations 2023: 2). The United Nations (2022: ii) claimed that the population aged over 65 is predicted to rise to 16% in 2050. In light of this nearly global demographic tendency, older people are still often socially represented as stereotypes, partly due to their depictions in the media. Media serves as a primary source to reflect how societies treat older people and, in turn, significantly influences the audiences' ideologies and opinions on ageing and senior citizens (van Dijk 1989; Iversen & Wilinska 2020). Moreover, many researchers have empirically proven that the negative media depictions of older people exert an impact on their physical and mental health (e.g., Levy et al., 1994; Fung et al., 2015). Children are also affected by their long time of media exposure negatively portraying older persons (Robinson et al., 2009). Thus, in 2020, the WHO report concerning countering ageism campaigns calls for more activists to properly utilize the media to alter the prevailing ageist narratives about old age. Older persons are expected to become more and more visible in the media in response to increasing age equality in democratic societies (Amaral et al. 2019), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since older persons are conceived as the vulnerable and quickly stricken group by COVID-19, the media coverage of older people around the world is significantly increasing. However, it remains true that older persons are still not adequately represented compared with their demographic statistics. Furthermore, in such few media descriptions, they are always portrayed as a homogeneous group (Amaral et al. 2019) with certain qualities, such as frailty, dependency, and a decline in cognitive and psychological ability (Swift & Steeden 2020: 31). Positive depictions of older persons are more likely to be found in advertisements (e.g. Roy & Harwood, 1997).

Media frames possess the ability to present us with desired pre-constructed narratives that prompt us to distinguish between the norm and the abnormal, directing us on how to categorize various groups into their appropriate classifications, or they may propose eliminating these categories and adopting a more inclusive viewpoint (Fornaciari & Goldman 2019). Whether positive or negative depictions of older persons has an influence on the viewers' perception of older people and their later lives; and further, these perceptions might be internalized into the viewers' beliefs, which are likely to affect their health as they age (Kovács et al., 2021). Additionally, ageing self-stereotypes can operate without awareness to influence older adults' cognitive, physical, and other health outcomes (Levy 2003). It means that older people's health is closely related to their perception of old age. Levy (2003) stated that such perception has been rooted in their childhood and reinforced during their adulthood, unconsciously affected by the societal mainstream values manifested in the media. The motivation for this study is that older people's media representations not only impact the older generation's self-perception and health but also exert a wide-ranging influence on the views of the younger generation towards the older generation and their future well-being as they become old.

There are quite a few studies exploring ageing and media from various perspectives since the 1990s (e.g., Roy & Harwood, 1997; Prieler et al., 2009, 2015, 2017; Sánchez-Román, 2022). Sexism often intersects with ageism, especially older women who seem to be ambivalent with older men's media representations (e.g., Sánchez-Román et al., 2022; Kline et al., 2023). The ambivalent portrayals of general older persons in the media remain unexplored. This study is to examine the ambivalent representations of older persons in various media types.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. PRISMA STATEMENT
PRISMA refers to Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, an efficient method to monitor the process of meta-analysis and systematic analysis (Moher et al., 2009). The primary focus of PRISMA is on reporting studies evaluating the effects of interventions based on a set of basic requirements designed to ensure high-quality research (2023, http://www.prisma-statement.org/).

B. FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION
PICo served as the foundation for the development of the study questions. PICo is a resource that helps writers develop high-quality review research questions. Population, problem, interest, and context are the three crucial concepts upon which PICo rests. Based on these concepts, this study has the following three key concepts: older persons (population), ambivalent representations (interest), and media (context). This systematic review study forms two questions: (1) How are older persons negatively portrayed in the media? (2) How are older persons positively portrayed in the media?

C. SYSTEMATIC SEARCHING STRATEGIES
As illustrated in Fig. 1, there are three primary components of systematic searching: identification, screening, and eligibility.
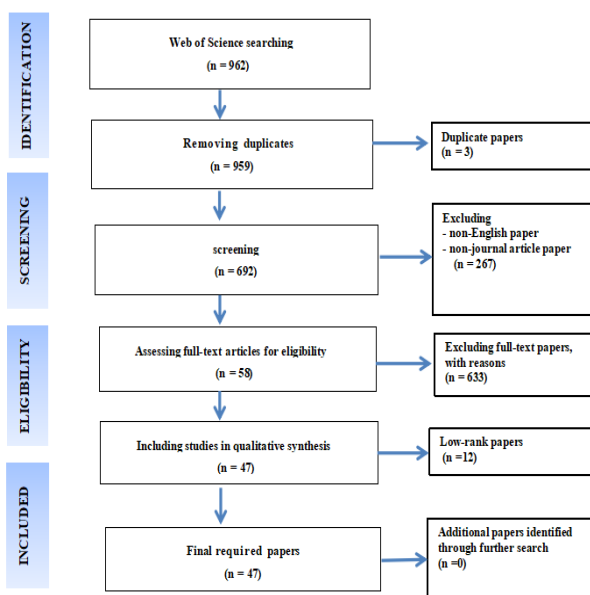

Fig. 1 A flow diagram of a systematic searching process

Identification

Based on the research questions, the right keywords were identified for the search process (Okoli & Schabram, 2010). This study utilizes three keywords (<representation>, <older people>, and <media>) and their similar expressions, which depended on thesaurus websites, keywords shown in previous research, keywords appearing in Web of Science (WoS) and keywords recommended by experts. A series of related keyword

strings (shown in Table 1) were used to search the required articles in the WoS database. Web of Science is regarded as the most reliable and impartial citation database in the world, and its core collections are carefully selected through an independent, comprehensive editorial process to ensure the high quality of the journals. The search results contain 962 articles that satisfy the research aims.

Table 1: The Search Strings

Database	Search Strings
Web of Science	Advanced search (combine the following three sets) (962) TOPIC: (representation* OR image* OR portrayal*OR depictions*) (2,936,316) AND TOPIC: (older adult* OR older people OR the elderly OR senior citizens* OR elderly people) (772,889) AND TOPIC: (media) (2,013,763) Note: The search results were accessed on November 9, 2023.

Screening

First, 3 duplicates were excluded from the 962 records. Second, the reset 959 articles were screened again to remove 90 proceedings papers, 35 review articles, 20 book chapters or reviews, 5 editorial materials, and 3 meeting abstracts. 806 journal articles were remained. Third, only journal articles published in English were included in this review, excluding 39 Spanish, 21 Russian, 12 Portuguese, 14 French, 7 German, 7 Croatian, 4 Swedish, 4 Turkish, 2 Chinese, 1 Afrikaans, 1 Italian, 1 Korean, and 1 Slovenian article. The remaining 692 articles were selected further in the next eligibility process.

Eligibility

In this process, the authors carefully reviewed the remaining articles to make sure that every article met the criteria. The authors read the title and abstract of each remaining article. 633 articles were removed for the following three reasons: Firstly, the primary research objects are not older adults, but other age groups or social groups, such as young people, children, patients, disabled people, women, and adolescents; secondly, the context is not set in the media, but other technological devices, such as digital public service, image-related or chat-bot technologies, or Digital Voice Assistants, snap-chat; thirdly, the focuses don't rest on the media portrayals of older people, but other irrelevant aspects, such as health problems (death, dementia, sexuality, assisted dying, cancer, Alzheimer, diabetes, hearing loss, exercise addiction, body, etc.), welfare and elder care (nursing home, the aged care sector, self-care, retirement, etc.), the attitudes and perceptions towards older adults, the concepts of population ageing/successful/healthy ageing, gentrification, and inter-generational relations. One full-text article is found in Turkish, and only the abstract is shown in English. Therefore, only 58 full-text articles were left.
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Quality Appraisal

To ensure the quality of the selected articles, two experts concentrated on the themes and methodology of the remaining articles, assessed their quality, and classified them into low, moderate, and high-quality categories (Petticrew & Roberts 2006). This study only reviewed the articles rated as high or moderate. Two experts discussed and had to reach a consensus on the inclusion or removal of the articles for this study. At least they need to agree that the quality of the selected items must meet a moderate level. After the appraisal, 23 papers were assessed as high, 24 as moderate, and 11 as low. Therefore, this study only reviewed 47 journal articles.

Data Abstraction and Analysis

The required articles were analyzed through thematic analysis to define the recurring themes. It is a method used to generate overarching themes and sub-themes from qualitative data after observing motifs and designs, categorizing comparable elements, and quantifying and identifying the similarities and correlations from the extracted data (Braun & Clarke 2006). Seven main themes were developed after merging the similar or associated data into one theme, which were: (a)presence frequency; (b)physical features; (c)personality traits; (d)health conditions; (e)social engagement; (f)stereotypes; and (g)gender. The selected articles cover various methods and media forms, so different variables were set based on distinctive coding schemes. Because the research objects of this review are older people, the focus rests on human characteristics, which are the most commonly discussed. Relevant variables include older people's physical features, health, personality traits, and activities portrayed in the media. Other variables, such as contextual attributes, genres, product categories, etc., are not included.

III. RESULTS

A. Distributions of Required Articles in Space and Time
This study examined 47 journal articles after a rigorous and systematic selection process. As Fig. 2a shows, 12 articles are set in the U.S. accounted for the highest number, followed by Canada (3), Germany (3), and Spain (3). The rest of the countries only contain 1 or 2 articles. 7 articles were not included in this distribution

analysis because three of them chose YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook as the data sources, which belonged to worldwide social media, except some blocking countries (Oró-Piqueras & Marques, 2017; Makita et al., 2021; Graham, 2022). Also, more than one country was involved in another four articles (Sciplino et al., 2010; Hurd et al., 2014; Gewirtz-Meydan & Ayalon 2018; Rovner-Lev & Elias 2020). However, the above seven articles can be located in western countries. Therefore, 76.6% of the studies on media representation were from Western countries, only 21.3% from Asian countries and 2.1% from Latin America.
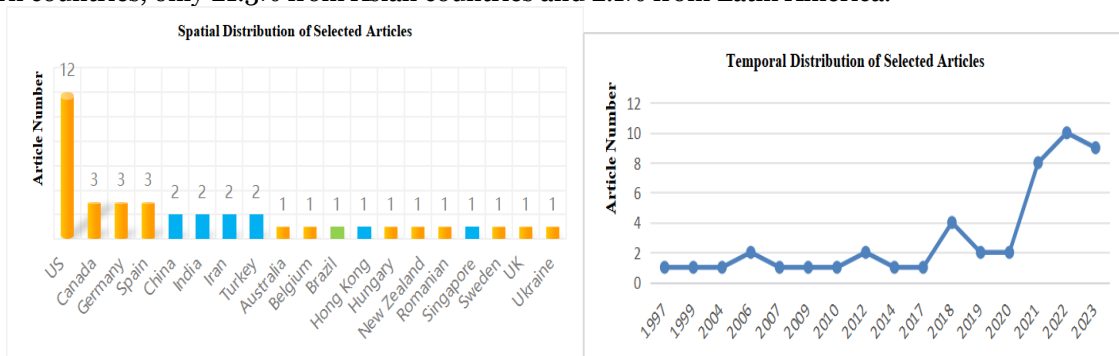

Fig. 2: (a) The Distribution of required articles in space
(b) The Distribution of required articles in time

As Fig. 2b shows, these 47 articles can be dated back to 1997, and until November 9, 2023 (the search date of this review). The number of the required articles in recent three years accounted for 57.4%, even more than the sum of the previous two decades. In the 1990s, only 1997 and 1999 documented the articles on the theme, while since 2017, the related articles appeared every year in a row and took on a significant increment. The issue of media representations of older people is gaining continuous and increasing attention with the deepening ageing of the global population.

B. Media Representation of Older People —Contextual Issues
The methods and types of media used in the selected articles are displayed in Fig. 3a and Fig. 3b. According to 3a, there were nine research methods. 27 articles used content analysis (abbr. CA, 57.4%) to explore the media depictions of older people, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies. Quantitative content analysis presented the number of older people appearing in the media. Qualitative content analysis focused on how to code the features of older people in the media. Thematic analysis (abbr. TA) accounted for 6.4%, followed by semiotic analysis, discourse analysis, document analysis, observation, ethnography, longitudinal analysis, and visual analysis. 9 articles utilized two methods (19.1%), 3 of which combined content analysis with discourse analysis and 3 merged content analysis and thematic analysis. Overall, content analysis, thematic analysis, and discourse analysis (including critical DA and multi-modal DA) are the three dominant research methods to explore the older persons' various media representations. In terms of media types, this review referred to diverse forms of media in a broad sense, consisting of print media, digital media, photography, movies, radio, television, and advertising, etc (Lister et al. 2008). As Figure 3b presented, digital media was the most frequent data source in the selected articles, occupying 51% (24 articles), followed by television with 15% (7 articles), print media 11% (5 articles), advertising 11% (5 articles), movies 6% (3 articles), radio 2% (1 article). Two articles involve more than one media type (Çelik, H. C. 2023; Hurd et al. 2020). Media data could be divided into textual and visual data. In the above media discourse, 41% (19 articles) of the selected articles only analyzed visual data, 38% (18 articles) focused only on textual messages, and 21% (10 articles) discussed both visual and textual data.
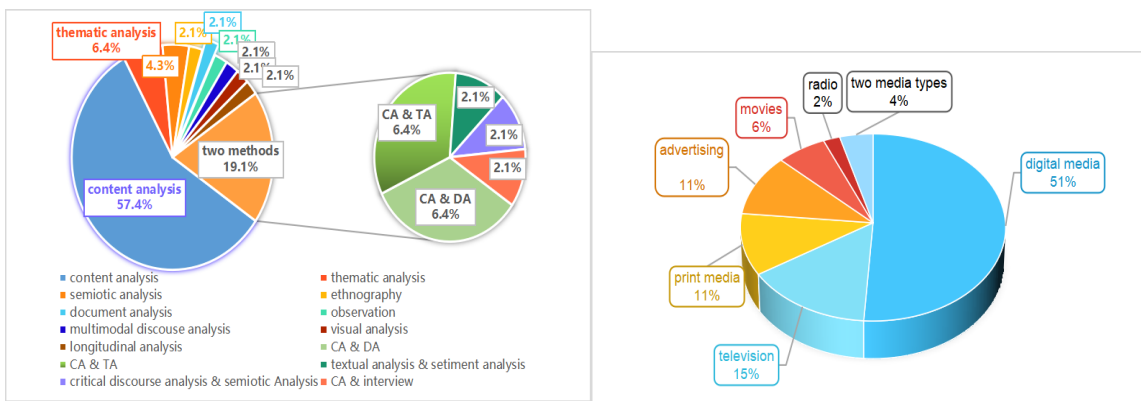

(a) (b)
Fig. 3: (a) Research methods used in the selected articles
(b) The media types in the selected articles

C. Media Representation of Older People −Thematic Analysis

(a) Presence frequency
Media is an effective method to reflect what happened to the reality, which is supposed to demonstrate the increasing ageing population. However, the frequency of older persons appearing in the media is not equivalent to their actual demographic data in various types of global media. They are often underrepresented. For example, in advertising, only 6.9% characters were older ones in American TV commercials (Roy & Harwood, 1997), and 16% of 50+ models appeared in UK newspapers and magazine advertisements (Carrigan & Szmigin 1999). Only 121 (6.0%) people in the the Turkish television commercials were identified as older adults (Kaya & Özdemir 2023). Similarly, in television and movies, only 30 characters (8.5%) were rated as senior persons in 32 popular German TV drama series of 2001 (Kessler et al. 2004), and only 41 older characters (7%) were identified in American teen movies from 1980-2006 (Robinson, T. et al., 2009). Even in a diachronic study, only 133 older adults aged 65+ (6.6%) were rated in American population fictional TV shows from 2004 to 2018, while the ratio of older people has increased from 12.3% in 2004 to 15.4% in 2017 (Markov & Yoon, 2021). In the print media, only 605 older characters (5.6%) were coded in American popular children's picture books around ten years (Danowski & Robinson 2012). And also in the news media, only 37 articles in New Zealand news mainly or totally reported older people's COVID-19 experience (Morgan et al., 2021), and only 1.75% of the Ukranian news was about older people aged 60 and over in March 2020 (Balandina et al., 2023).
There are some exceptions with good hints. In comparison to the general population in the U.S., 17.7% of older adults among 795 speaking characters were not underrepresented in American Christmas films (Kline et al., 2023). Some special Swedish authorities on Facebook, such as the art museum and the city library, presented older people more often (Xu, 2022). Older people were also increasingly visible in American Time magazine advertising from 2000 to 2019 (Ji & Cooper, 2022).

(b) Physical features
When older persons are mentioned, white hair, wrinkles or stiff body may spontaneously occur to our mind. For example, older famous stars' loss of physical attractiveness and sexuality, such as all in wrinkles, disgraceful appearance, were shown in Ukrainian news media (Balandina et al., 2023). But in some media, positive physical features stand out. For example, older characters were portrayed as physically attractive (90%) in teen movies (Robinson, T. et al. 2009). Swedish local authorities depicted older people using Facebook in a visual manner as "moderately physically capable" (Xu, 2022). Additionally, 99.5% of old figures in Time ads were described without any visible infirmities, which was opposite to the elders' frailties in reality (Ji & Cooper, 2022).
In terms of sexuality, the images of "heterosexual, light-skinned" and fully dressed couples were displayed on 39 dating sites, with no sexual attractiveness and no same-sex couple (Gewirtz-Meydan & Ayalon 2018). Except unidentified sexuality, 43.6% of older adults are identified straight (Markov & Yoon, 2021). Other sexual orientations of older people are excluded from the studies (except Hurd et al., 2020), which is not the case in reality.

(c) Personality traits
Positive personality traits of older persons are mainly shown on television, movies and advertising. For example, in children's animated TV programs, the predominant personality trait of older characters was "intelligent" (37%) (Robinson & Anderson 2006), which was also most dominant in teen movies (22%) (Robinson et al. 2009). "Friendly" was another most commonly represented personality trait in American teen movies (25%) (Robinson et al., 2009) and in cartoons (25%) (Robinson et al., 2007). "Loving/caring" in the Disney animated films (from 2004-2016) has increased to 37% and becomes the most dominant personality trait, compared to its proportion (22%) in the Disney animated films (from 1937-2004) (Zurcher & Robinson, 2018). What's more, older adults were extremely positively shown as "active (100%), happy (93.7%), and strong (96.9%), and lucid (100%)" in 778 American TV commercials (Roy & Harwood, 1997). Even during the pandemic, Capable, as a special personality trait, appears more frequently with older people in the Spanish newspaper headlines in the pandemic, like retired doctors (Sánchez-Izquierdo et al., 2023).
But still in television and movies, some negative personality traits co-exist with positive ones. In 60 American most popular teen movies from 1980-2006, the prevailing personality trait of older characters was "angry/grumpy/stern" (35%) (Robinson et al. 2009), which was consistently present in Disney films (25%) (Robinson et al., 2007) and in children's animated TV programs (28%) (Robinson & Anderson 2006). Compared to the previous study on Disney animated films (Robinson et al., 2007), there was a marginal rise in the proportion of older people's "villain" role (Zurcher & Robinson, 2018), which was more memorable to children (Robinson et al., 2007).
More negative personality traits of older persons are shown in the news media and social media. For example, Ukrainian news media reported older people as the victims (24.4%), the offender (14.3%), aggression (13%), poverty (10.1%), and other negative features (Balandina et al., 2023). The headlines of five Spanish newspapers relating older people with Victims are also frequent before the pandemic (Sánchez-Izquierdo et al., 2023). The photographs on Iranian news websites showed older people as unattractive (Kamalvand, 2022). In social media, older adults were described with characteristics such as "ignorance, stupidity,

infantilism, senility, and egoism," replacing their traditional image of wisdom, rich life experience, and kindness in Romanian public blog articles (Teodorescu & Chiribuca 2018), and regarded as a powerless, vulnerable, and homogeneous ones in the tweets (Makita et al., 2021). In 65 YouTube videos from India, 75.38% framed older people negatively as "a vulnerable population," frail, reliable, helpless, and neglected by family and society (Bandyopadhyay & Singh, 2022). In addition, older adults were negatively portrayed as immature, illiterate, and dependent (through infantilization), as lacking in culture or with less refined preferences (through barbarization), and as an object of sexual fetish (through fetishization) in 98 images from five Singaporean meme factories (Lee & Hoh 2023).

(d) Health conditions
Frailty, declining health conditions, and care institutions are always related to older persons, which is also manifested in the media. For example, they were photographed and negatively represented as ugly, declining, and weak on Iranian websites (Aliakbari & Kamalvand 2023). On Chinese news websites, they were described as vulnerable "passive recipients" who must rely on their families, public organizations, and governments to overcome the pandemic, reinforcing the dichotomy of young vs. old. (Zhang & Liu, 2021). In Hong Kong, older people were portrayed as frail, dependent, and deprived of every facet of life in the three most famous newspapers with diverse political inclinations (Yang et al., 2022). Similarly, in the western media, although one-third of news articles constructed older people as active, their autonomy and competence to cope with this threat were still underrepresented; and they were stigmatized as "inherently vulnerable" in mainstream New Zealand news media (Morgan et al., 2021). Older adults in the Canadian Francophone media were connected with negative expressions, such as vulnerable, at risk, alone, and disease, and they were "people to fight for" and needed to be protected (Lagacé et al., 2021). Their bad health conditions and poor quality of life are also shown in Spanish newspapers during the pandemic (Meneses-Fernández & Santana-Hernández 2022); The headlines connecting older people with Sick increase during the COVID-19 pandemic in five newspapers of Spain (Sánchez-Izquierdo et al., 2023). Jeong et al. (2022) found that older people were depicted as a vulnerable group and a burden on society during COVID-19, and homogeneously framed as the victims of this health crisis, which selectively ignored some favourable findings, such as consistently lower mortality rates for older people in Malaysia during the pandemic (Nurainina & Rose, 2023). The portrayal of older men as either experienced and influential celebrities or ordinary happy men in good health was only shown in the advertisements and interest stories featured in six North American men's magazines, although they appear little (Clarke et al., 2014).

(e) Social engagement
Older people refer to retired ones, which seems to signify that they will have less social engagement. Just as Iranian news websites show, older people were pictured as lonely without the company of family members, passive in social events, and segregated from the younger generation; most images of older people seemed to be "static, stable, and immobile" without any activity, even not wearing masks and not keeping distant from others (Kamalvand, 2022). Similarly, more than half of grandparents engage in sedentary physical activities, such as sitting, reading, lying in bed, and standing in children's books from Britain, Italy, and Greece (Sciplino et al., 2010).
However, the eight highly viewed YouTube videos presented older people as "competent, innovative and sexually active" (Oró-Piqueras & Marques, 2017). Li (2021) also found that older people represented themselves in a positive (68.42%) and diverse way on a Chinese WeChat official account geared at older adults: they take care of themselves to keep healthy, anticipate an active and colourful later life, have an optimistic attitude, and try their best to keep pace with the social development and develop a solid sense of self. Likewise, Duque (2021) conducted a 16-month ethnography and discovered that older participants presented themselves as busy, active, and disseminating information of general interest on a WhatsApp group in Brazil. Older people were also represented as "remaining socially engaged", like coffee breaks or foot bathing after retirement (Xu, 2022). With the traits of "competence, looking active and enjoying an activity", 90% of 50+ models were portrayed extremely positively in UK newspaper and magazine advertisements (Carrigan & Szmigin 1999). Compared gerontological evidence in the real world, older people were excessively positively portrayed as ones to engage social activities in German prime time TV series (Kessler et al., 2004).

(f) Stereotypes
There are negative and positive age stereotypes in the media, both of which exert good and bad influence on older and younger viewers. Older viewers may feel frustrated when they realize they cannot meet the requirements of healthy ageing in the media. Younger viewers may be misled by the negative stereotypes recurring in the media. For example, "Golden Ager" (33.1%) was the most dominant positive stereotype, and most of the age stereotypes mentioned (51.9% of characters) were positive in American prime-time TV series (Markov & Yoon, 2021). Over 60% of older characters in American Christmas films were portrayed as "Sage, Golden Ager, Perfect Grandparent, and John Wayne Conservative" (Kline et al., 2023). Positive stereotypes, including "Golden ager" (55.4%) and "Perfect grandparent" (39.7%), appeared in Turkish TV commercials (Kaya & Özdemir 2023). Such positive stereotypes on the TV, movies and commercials are likely to render older people who did not satisfy the requirements of successful ageing feel marginalized from the older group,

and they are regarded as a burden on younger generation and the whole society in the Globe and Mail (Rozanova & Northcott 2006). The younger kids are, the more they are influenced by the media depictions about older people. For example, older adults play major roles in TV show Grandpa in My pocket for preschoolers, and some stereotypical depictions, such as frailty, dependence and social isolation (Rovner-Lev & Elias, 2020) may implant negative information about ageing in the preschoolers' brain. Some negative patterns of older people's representations recur in German newspapers during the pandemic, including loneliness, vulnerability, insanity/confusion, and heteronormativity (Adlung & Backes 2023), which might intensify the viewers' negative age stereotypes. Even the themes shown in the 400 hot songs from 2016-2019 implicitly reflect negative age stereotypes (Walker et al. 2023).

(g) Gender

Ageism and sexism can intersect, resulting older women facing a double discrimination due to their gender (Woodward, 1999; Tretheway, 2001). Firstly, older men are more over-represented than older women, which is opposite of sex ratio of the actual population (e.g. Roy & Harwood 1997; Robinson et al. 2009; Kessler et al. 2004; Danowski & Robinson 2012; Markov and Yoon 2021; Ji & Cooper 2022). Secondly, older men are often depicted differently from older women in many aspects. For example, older men were described as ones who have better health, socio-economic and psychological resources than older women (Kessler et al., 2004), and it was proved in Hungarian TV news programs where older men are more likely than women to be depicted as "affluent, elegant, knowledgeable, powerful and actively working" while women were shown as "soft, friendly, family-oriented" in their mundane roles and some "less-productive activities", such as shopping (Kovács et al., 2021). Thirdly, older women bear a higher level of ageism than older men, who were always described with unfavorable circumstances pertaining to health and physical attractiveness (Kamalvand, 2022; Aliakbari, M. & Kamalvand, A. 2023). "Weird, bizarre, mean, socially isolated and devaluated" images of older women appeared in an internationally popular British TV show, Grandpa in My Pocket (Rovner-Lev & Elias, 2020), and comic roles, even "comic violence" always happened on older female characters (Rovner-Lev & Elias, 2020, Çelik 2023). Fourthly, the images of older women were purposefully shown in the media. For example, they were visually shown as "younger and wore more cosmetics" on dating sites so as to win a man's attention (Gewirtz-Meydan & Ayalon 2018). By contrast, older women were made predominantly visible and suffering in German pandemic news discourse to appeal to the public to demonstrate empathy and unity and further rationally take actions to address the pandemic (Adlung & Backes, 2023). Fifthly, older women were confined to family duties, such as household chores or care-giving tasks (Sánchez-Román et al., 2022; Çelik 2023).

IV. DISCUSSION

Media portrayals of older people can reflect and construct how societies view older groups, influencing the attitudes and perceptions of people of all ages toward global population ageing and their own ageing process. Furthermore, this will bring about economic, political and social reforms and policy adjustments (e.g. Matsumura 2014; Roziana & Suhaila 2018; Soong 2020). Based on the spatial and temporal distribution shown in Fig. 2(b), the studies on older people's media depictions are sharply increasing after 2020, which may prove that more and more scholars realize the importance of media against the background of population ageing. However, as Fig. 2(a) shows, more than three-quarters of the articles were set in western nations, while the real challenge is the fastest ageing speed in Asia. By 2060, "one out of every 10 people in the world will be an older Asian" (United States Census Bureau, 2022)[1]. Therefore, it is more urgent to learn this issue in Asian media. More than one-third of the selected articles use mixed methodology, especially mixed content analysis (80%). Quantitative content analysis is usually adopted to present the frequency of older people's presence, major or minor role, and certain personality traits. Qualitative content analysis mainly codes the media portrayals of older people from different dimensions. News media (especially news websites) and social media (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Facebook) account for more than 50% of the selected articles, which will continue to rise with the widespread use of the Internet all over the world. Moreover, 41% of articles focus only on visual images, and 62% mention the visual portrayals of older people. On the one hand, it is related to media forms such as movies and ads. On the other hand, Scott's theory of visual rhetoric assumed that visuals enhance the transmission of complex messages and alleviate the effort of reading (Scott, 1994). Moreover, visuals strengthen the process of perceiving, interpreting, and socially internalizing the intended message (Zieba 2020) and have richer three-dimensional meanings (representational, interactional, and compositional meanings) (Kress & Leeuwen 2006). Consequently, the visual images of older people might more deeply impress the viewers, which seems to be a trend in future studies.

The presence frequency of older persons is always compared with their demographic share in the real world and found to be grossly underrepresented in American media (Roy & Harwood, 1997; Robinson et al., 2009; Danowski & Robinson 2012; Markov & Yoon, 2021), UK media (Carrigan & Szmigin, I., 1999), German media (Kessler et al., 2004), New Zealand media (Morgan et al., 2021), and Turkish media (Kaya & Özdemir 2023). Only a few studies (e.g., Xu, 2022; Ji & Cooper, 2022; Kline et al., 2023) noticed the increasing media

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[1] "Census Bureau Release New Report on Aging in Asia" dated 21 June 2022 on https://www.census.gov/[downloaded on 9 Nov 2023], available at https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/aging-in-asia.html.

visibility of older people. The underrepresentation of older people is partly due to their scarcity of active participation in the media. Thus, more evidence may be necessary to prove the older group's seriously insufficient media visibility, such as the comparison between the children and their demographic data. More older adults will give their own voice with the wide use of self-media and their improvement of digital literacy (Li 2021).

Whether negative or positive media representations of different aspects of older persons, it tends to highlight certain prominent features and then impress the viewers with preexisting stereotypical traits. The media doesn't reflect older people's heterogeneous experiences and backgrounds (Ayalon et al., 2021). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, older people in the media are dominantly and stereotypically related to physical decline, illnesses, and vulnerability, especially getting support from the epidemiological statistics and findings shown in the studies on the positive correlation between old age and COVID-19 (Kang and Jung 2020; Sominsky et al. 2020). Thus, such media representation seems to call for the government, institutions, and other social groups to help older people. Still, the fact is that it constructs seniors as the victims who need to fight for in this health crisis, which may intensify ageism and age stereotypes to some extent. Moreover, extreme positive portrayals of older people in the ads or TV series are also far away from real life, which may influence older people's self-awareness (Roy & Harwood, 1997).

Two meaningful tendencies are worth noting. One is that diverse subgroups of older people have been studied. For example, older people were divided into an old-old group (aged 80+) and a young-old group (aged 65-80) in some studies. Reul et al. (2022) discovered the different representation in 44 Flemish public TV programs: the former population were passive and vulnerable, especially those who resided in nursing homes and were increasingly reported during COVID-19, while the latter group was described as dynamic and active. More specifically, the photographic portrayals of older people with dementia in the 4 German weekly news magazines (2000-2009) (Kessler, EM, & Schwender, C., 2012), "older drivers" in Australian newspapers (Harkin et al. 2018), older female models in the US media (Fornaciari & Goldman, 2019), and largely invisible older LGBTQ persons in Canadian print and online news media (Hurd et al., 2020) entered into this research scope. Another one is that older people's self-representation helps to demonstrate their personality and later life more heterogeneously, comprehensively, and realistically. For example, older people's positive and diverse self-representation in the popular posts of a Chinese WeChat official account geared at older adults (Li 2021), older participants presenting themselves on WhatsApp groups in Brazil (Duque, M., 2021), and older people expressing themselves in COVID-19 related newspapers (Jeong et al., 2022).

In terms of the media descriptions of older people in children-oriented media, both Robinson et al. (2007) and Zurcher & Robinson (2018) respectively focused on Disney animated films in two periods, 1937-2004 and 2004-2016, and their overall portrayals of older characters were positive, similar to children's picture books (Danowski & Robinson 2012). However, old characters' "villain" images are extremely negative and deeply impress the children (Robinson & Anderson, 2006), and more than half of grandparents always sit, read, lie in bed, and stand in children's books (Sciplino et al., 2010). Children have known the stereotypes of older people since they were 3 and 5 (Rovner-Lev & Elias, 2020), and their perception of older people will be intensified by more exposure to the portrayals in children's movies, books, TV shows, etc. and less contact with seniors in reality. Gradually, negative representations and stereotypes in the media aimed at children will impact their attitudes, which may further leave a deep impression until their adulthood (Robinson et al. 2007). Therefore, an effective way to reduce ageism is to implant positive major old characters in children's media, which may influence their perception of older people and their ageing from a very young age.

The interface of sexism and ageism in the media has been noticed. Older women are oppositely portrayed in Hungarian news programs (Kovács et al., 2021) and online dating sites (Gewirtz-Meydan & Ayalon 2018); older women dressed casually in formal situations while they are portrayed as ones who have fewer wrinkles and wear jewelry to pretend to be young in the latter situation. Older women's external features seem to be changed according to various media purposes, which seldom happens to older men.

Table 2: Ambivalent Representations of Older Persons in the Media

Dimensions	Positive	Negative	ambivalent
Presence Frequency	not underrepresented in Christmas films/increasingly visible in *Time* advertising	underrepresented in advertising, TV drama series, teen movies, children's picture books, and news media	i. not equivalent to the demographic data of the older population; ii. news media reports negative features more often than positive features, which the viewers tend to believe, because of its more direct and more accurate representations of social reality (Kovács et al. 2021); iii. Positive, and sometimes extreme positive representations of older people on TV,
Physical Features	physically attractive or capable in teen movies, Facebook, and advertising	loss of physical attractiveness and sexuality in news media and dating sites	
Personality Traits	intelligent, friendly, loving/caring, active, happy, strong, lucid, capable in TV programs,	angry, grumpy,stern in Disney films and TV programs. victims, offenders,	

	teen movies, cartoons, and commercials	aggression, poverty, ignorance, stupidity, infantilism, senility, egoism, vulnerability in news media and social media	advertising and movies might mislead older and younger generations to have an illusion of successful ageing, and people might have ageist attitudes towards those who can't satisfy the successful ageing in the media.
Health Conditions	healthy, powerful in men's magazines	vulnerable, frail, dependent, disease, at risk in the news media	
Social Engagement	competent, active, busy, socially engaged in the social media, advertising, and TV series	lonely, passive, sedentary physical activities in the news media and children's books	
Stereotypes	Golden Ager, Perfect grandparent in the films, TV series, and commercials	frailty, dependence and social isolation, loneliness, vulnerability, insanity/confusion, and heteronormativity in TV shows and newspapers	
Gender	older men: better health, socio-economic and psychological resources, affluent, elegant, knowledgeable, powerful, and actively working on TV	older women: less-productive activities, soft, family-oriented, weird, bizarre, mean, socially isolated, and devaluated	

V. CONCLUSION

The present review of 47 journal articles helps us gain insight into how older persons are reflected in various media types in different countries. This review also revealed the current research findings and trends in future research directions and gave some suggestions for further studies. However, the search results are limited in the WoS database, which hasn't included all relevant studies. Due to the media's textual and visual representation forms, most studies mainly used content analysis, thematic analysis, or discourse analysis. After thematic analysis, the required articles were categorized into seven main themes: (a)presence frequency; (b)physical features; (c)personality traits; (d)health conditions; (e)social engagement; (f)stereotypes; (g) gender. All the findings prove that older people in the media are ambivalently portrayed in each category, consisting of positive and negative tones. Nowadays, the young generation can be regarded as the netizen generation, surrounded by abundant information from the Internet. At the same time, older people haven't grasped digital measures to timely and fully express themselves. Therefore, the media is duty-bound to regulate its agenda, depict older groups in a positive manner, and reduce ageism, which is of great importance to cope with the global population ageing.

From this review, there are still some gaps which further research can focus on. Firstly, a majority of the existing studies focus on visual images or textual messages, not paying enough attention to older people's own expressions in the media (except Jeong et al., 2022; Sánchez-Román et al., 2022). That is to say, older persons' self-representations in social media are still understudied. Secondly, the database is only limited to Web of Science. More expansive databases can be chosen in further studies to cover more related articles. Moreover, there are few comparative studies, such as the comparison between different media or between various media forms, except for the comparison between Turkish TV series and Netflix original series (Çelik 2023), and the comparison in print advertisements of English-language magazines between two periods (1997-2000 and 2007-2010) (Devi & Samanta 2019). Other comparative studies between western and Asian media, such as the comparative studies on TV commercials between South Korean and American (Lee et al. 2006) and between Taiwan and UK (Chen 2015), are not included in this review, because of the database source. Plus, it is suggested that this issue in Asian countries is worthy studying, for their faster ageing speed. Lastly, the self-representations of older people in social media would be a significant topic, which may be helpful for the viewers, media staff and policy-makers understand the diversity of older group.

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