

## THE ROLE OF INSERTING ELDERLY CHARACTERS AND CAST IN BRAZILIAN SOAP OPERAS TO COMBAT AGEISM AND PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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### Abstract

**Background:** Brazilian soap operas are the main audiovisual cultural product consumed in the country and exported to other countries, being an important part of popular culture and integrating the nation's narrative. Broadcast on open channels, they are watched by different age groups, especially by elderly people who currently make up 15.6% of Brazilian population. They are an important tool for popular entertainment and leisure and actively participate in the debate on sociocultural habits. Some productions deliberately take on a role in social merchandising, promoting information about phenomena such as violence and substance abuse. Soap operas are relevant vehicles for advertising products and services, whether in paid advertisements to be shown during breaks, or in the insertion of ideas about lifestyles in the narratives, whether sponsored or not, interfering with the knowledge and practices of their viewers in relation to health, food and ways of dressing and speaking, which can have impact on interpersonal and intergenerational relationships. **Purpose:** It is relevant to understand how elderly people are represented in the characters of Brazilian soap operas and in the inclusion of elderly actors and actresses in the plots, to analyze the social role of these works in combating or perpetuating attitudinal barriers such as ageism and other prejudices. **Methods:** Exploratory study of new soap operas produced and shown by Globo from 2000 to 2025 to a) identify cast members and elderly characters and b) analyze these participations in the plots, based on literature on representation and social, gender and racial issues. **Results:** Preliminary results indicate a tendency to reproduce stereotypes: few protagonists are elderly and, in general, they are villains; when couples, either both are elderly or the man is older; the elderly woman in a romantic relationship with a younger partner is generally portrayed as a rich character who supports the young man in search of financial stability, but without real emotional interest in her. Little representation of black elderly people (except in soap operas about the era of slavery) or LGBTQIAP+ elderly people. Rare presence of gray-haired actresses, but regular presence of gray-haired actors. **Conclusion:** Although the main objective of soap operas is leisure and entertainment, followed by advertising from sponsors, it is essential to recognize their role as an informative and influential vehicle in Brazilian society. There is a reproduction of stereotypes both in the cast and in the construction of elderly characters, which can negatively impact self-esteem and the perception of human diversity on the part of

people who watch these plots. **Implications:** Is it possible to better portray the elderly population in the main showcase of Brazilian society on television? With Ethical and Citizen Education in school and professional training, especially in work related to culture, art and leisure, we believe so. Creative freedom can also be aligned with ethical conduct aimed at the mass dissemination of social values that promote equity and inclusion of elderly people, as well as combating prejudice, stereotypes and other attitudinal barriers, without losing the quality and originality of the plots.

**Keywords:** Ageism; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion; Popular Culture.