

Navigating the generational divide: Students' views on baby boomer teachers' behavior and age-related challenges



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Abstract As universities increasingly rely on multigenerational faculty, understanding how students perceive elderly Baby Boomer teachers has become essential for strengthening classroom interactions and promoting inclusive educational environments. Senior educators bring valuable professional experience and deep disciplinary knowledge; however, age-related changes and shifting student expectations may influence how their behaviors are interpreted. Examining student perceptions of these teachers, including attitudes related to ageism, provides insight into how intergenerational dynamics shape learning, communication, and academic development. This study therefore seeks to assess both the behavioral characteristics of Baby Boomer teachers and the extent to which students' views reflect empathy, bias, or constructive expectations. The research employed a mixed-methods design to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 202 students, with results analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Qualitative insights were gathered from interviews and observation notes involving 12 purposively selected key informants, including class presidents and committee members familiar with senior faculty interactions. Findings revealed that students rated the overall behavior of Baby Boomer teachers at a moderate level. The domain of Beliefs and Values received the highest rating, reflecting strong student respect for teachers' ethical foundations and life experience. Physical Changes, Societal Expectations, and Cognitive Mechanisms were also rated at moderate levels, while Emotional Management received the lowest score, though it remained within the moderate range. In terms of ageism, students expressed understanding of physical and technological limitations while valuing teachers' extensive expertise. They expected senior faculty to demonstrate ethical conduct, emotional stability, and fairness, particularly in difficult situations. Students also noted that positive relationships with elderly teachers enhanced communication skills, confidence, and overall personal development.

Keywords: ageism, elderly teachers, beliefs and values, intergenerational dynamics, higher education

1. Introduction

The generational gap in contemporary society often hinders effective communication and understanding, especially between Baby Boomers (1946–1964) and Millennials (1981–1996), groups with divergent life experiences and cultural orientations (Gibson et al., 2010; Markowitz & Reid, 2018). “Manut-Pa, Manut-Loong,” or “Auntie-Uncle Syndrome,” a term reflecting the perception that Baby Boomers hold biases or resist changes championed by younger generations, captures a stark manifestation of this divide (Johnson & Kardos, 2005). Educational settings often view older educators as clinging to traditional pedagogical methods incompatible with the preferences of a digitally fluent generation, making the syndrome especially relevant. Students accustomed to rapid technological adaptation perceive such traditionalism not only as antiquated but also as a barrier to effective learning and personal relevance (Josephine & Jones, 2022; Kegan, 1994). A lack of proficiency in new technologies among senior educators can further exacerbate the generational rift, creating inefficiencies in classroom management and knowledge transfer (Erikson, 1963; Piaget, 1977). The perceived inadequacy of older teaching methodologies coupled with technological misalignment fosters an environment where age-related biases flourish, detracting from the educational experience.

Generational divides impact not only interpersonal relationships but also the fabric of educational, societal, and cultural interactions. Within educational institutions, negative attitudes toward elderly professors can weaken the trust necessary for effective pedagogy, diminishing the influence of seasoned educators whose expertise could greatly enhance students' academic and personal development (Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020). Such dismissive perspectives threaten to obscure the inherent value of senior educators' extensive experience and insights, which could contribute to a more well-rounded educational experience, encompassing both academic knowledge and essential life skills (Kohlberg, 1984; Gibson et al., 2010). Societally and culturally, biases against older generations reflect a deeper tension between preserving institutional wisdom and embracing change. Academic spaces, ideally, should be grounds for fostering cross-generational collaboration, yet generational divides can



suppress the potential for mutual learning and shared innovation. A disregard for the contributions of older educators limits the diversity of perspectives essential for a dynamic, progressive society, suggesting the need for a more inclusive approach that values both tradition and innovation (Markowitz & Reid, 2018; Somboonboorana, 2023, 2024). Moreover, the generational divide within organizations and society significantly impacts interpersonal relationships, often resulting in social division and age-related discrimination that undermine cohesion and collaboration (Josephine & Jones, 2022). When younger generations harbor biases toward older individuals, workplace dynamics can suffer, with increased potential for conflict, dissatisfaction, and reduced efficiency. Differences in physical abilities, beliefs, cognitive processes, societal expectations, and emotional management further exacerbate these tensions (Assatarakul et al., 2024; Rahman & Mahadi, 2024). Nonetheless, fostering generational understanding presents a unique opportunity to strengthen organizations by promoting intergenerational collaboration. Encouraging lifelong learning and skill development for older employees can bridge the gap in adapting to contemporary changes, while creating an inclusive organizational culture that values the experiences and knowledge of all age groups can diminish ageist attitudes and cultivate mutual respect (Belenky et al., 1997; Johnson & Kardos, 2005; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

Research on Navigating the Generational Divide: Students' Views on Baby Boomer Teachers' Behavior and Age-Related Challenges as it relates to ageism toward elderly teachers provides a meaningful framework for understanding these challenges, specifically from the perspective of students who may hold negative stereotypes about older educators.

By examining how these biases shape students' perceptions of Baby Boomer educators, academic institutions and society can gain insights into the importance of fostering generational empathy and adaptability. Emphasizing policies that prioritize an educational environment responsive to both social and economic changes can offer a path to counter ageism, promoting a more harmonious and inclusive learning atmosphere. Furthermore, such policies can act as models for organizations striving to achieve a unified and forward-looking culture that values diverse perspectives, ultimately benefiting society and contributing to long-term organizational success.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of ageism

Ageism, defined as prejudice or discrimination against individuals based on age, disproportionately affects older adults and is prevalent across various domains, including social structures, workplaces, and healthcare systems, often with significant negative consequences for the well-being and quality of life of those affected (Pandya, 2016; Durongrittichai et al., 2022; Noor et al., 2024). Rooted in ingrained stereotypes that view older adults as physically frail, resistant to change, and dependent on others, ageism shapes social attitudes and individual behaviors. It can be categorized into two forms: Benevolent Ageism and Hostile Ageism. Benevolent Ageism refers to seemingly positive yet patronizing attitudes that view older adults as lovable but in need of protection, often manifesting as excessive concern or limiting autonomy (Lang et al., 2002). Hostile Ageism, on the other hand, reflects explicitly negative biases, such as perceiving older adults as burdensome, leading to their exclusion from social and professional activities. These forms of ageism reflect the broader stereotype dimensions of warmth and competence, where older adults are often seen as high in warmth but low in competence, leading to behaviors that, though well-intentioned, eventually reinforce stereotypes and diminish their agency (Fiske et al., 2002). In professional and healthcare settings, ageism manifests in ways that limit opportunities and access for older adults. In the workplace, older employees may face discrimination in hiring, promotion, and training, often due to assumptions that they are less adaptable, lower in productivity, or resistant to new technologies. Such biases restrict the professional growth of older individuals and devalue the experience they bring, creating an environment where their contributions are systematically overlooked. Healthcare systems often exhibit ageism, dismissing health concerns among older adults as normal aging instead of treatable conditions. This perspective can lead to healthcare inequalities, as older individuals may feel undervalued and avoid seeking medical assistance, exacerbating health disparities. Beyond physical health implications, ageism can inflict significant psychological harm, increasing the risk of anxiety and depression and even shortening life expectancy by affecting both mental and physical well-being (Garcia, 2020). Addressing ageism requires confronting these stereotypes to create inclusive, supportive environments that respect the autonomy and abilities of older adults across all spheres of life.

2.2. Theories and concepts of prejudice

Prejudice refers to negative attitudes directed toward individuals or groups, typically grounded in misconceptions, stereotypes, or irrational beliefs. Social psychology has extensively studied prejudice, understanding it as a product of intricate psychological processes shaped by cultural and social influences that inform individual attitudes and behaviors (Allport, 1954). Prejudice, at its core, stems from negative evaluations of groups, which stem from stereotypes that generalize characteristics or behaviors without accounting for individual variation (Tajfel, 1982). Social Identity Theory, introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979), sheds light on the psychological mechanisms behind prejudice, positing that people derive a sense of self from the social groups with which they identify. Individuals may view outgroups negatively to bolster their self-esteem and affirm their ingroup's status, thereby fostering prejudice and reinforcing group boundaries. Realistic Conflict Theory, as proposed by Sherif

(1967), provides another perspective, suggesting that prejudice is driven by competition for scarce resources. When groups vie for limited economic or social advantages, competition breeds animosity and strengthens negative feelings toward perceived rivals. This is evident in scenarios of economic competition or societal struggles for rights, where resource scarcity exacerbates intergroup tension and hostility.

Fear or discomfort regarding unfamiliar racial, religious, or cultural characteristics often triggers prejudice in multicultural societies, leading to feelings of unease and suspicion. Research on prejudice reduction emphasizes the importance of fostering understanding across groups to alleviate these fears (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Prejudice's implications extend beyond individuals, as it can lead to societal-level consequences such as discrimination, where individuals from different groups often experience unequal treatment in areas such as job opportunities, education access, and resource allocation (Allport, 1954). Prejudice also destabilizes communities, leading to societal conflict, division, and a strained social climate. Effective strategies for reducing prejudice focus on promoting acceptance of group differences, advocating for meaningful cross-group interactions, and employing educational programs that raise awareness and encourage inclusive attitudes. By creating opportunities for positive intergroup contact and fostering collaborative solutions, societies can work toward reducing prejudice and its associated conflicts, ultimately cultivating a more cohesive social environment (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Vygotsky et al., 1978).

2.3. *Concept of the stereotype content model (SCM)*

The Stereotype Content Model (SCM), that people evaluate others based on two primary dimensions: warmth and competence. According to Fiske et al. (2002), these dimensions explain why people perceive and treat different social groups differently. Perceptions of others' intentions, particularly their perceived friendliness or hostility toward one's own group, define warmth. People often rate groups perceived as non-threatening and benevolent, like the elderly or children, as high in warmth. Conversely, groups perceived as competitive or threatening to one's resources or values, like business elites, are seen as low in warmth (Cuddy et al., 2008). Competence, on the other hand, assesses perceived ability or effectiveness in achieving goals. Social groups that are economically successful or socially influential, such as professionals or executives, are typically viewed as high in competence, while groups with fewer resources, such as the homeless or financially disadvantaged, are often rated low. The SCM thus reveals how these two dimensions warmth and competence interact to form complex stereotypes that influence social perceptions.

SCM further explains how these perceptions of warmth and competence translate into specific attitudes and behaviors toward various groups. For instance, groups high in warmth but low in competence, such as the elderly or disabled, may elicit feelings of sympathy or pity, leading to treatment that is benevolent yet often patronizing or dismissive of their capabilities (Fiske et al., 2002). On the other hand, groups perceived as low in warmth but high in competence, such as wealthy businesspeople, are often viewed with envy or resentment, resulting in cautious or even antagonistic behaviors despite respect for their competence (Cuddy et al. 2007). SCM thus demonstrates that stereotypes are not uniformly positive or negative but are complex and multidimensional, leading to diverse social treatments. The model accentuates how individuals may extend assistance to groups seen as warm yet incompetent, albeit sometimes in a way that reinforces stereotypes, while they may display guarded admiration or distrust toward those regarded as competent but lacking warmth. By illustrating these patterns, SCM helps us understand the nuanced ways that stereotypes shape social dynamics and influence interactions across different social groups.

2.4. *Theories and concepts of discrimination*

Discrimination encompasses actions or behaviors that result in unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on specific characteristics such as race, religion, gender, age, or social status. This inequality often stems from stereotypes or biases held about a particular group, leading to unjust treatment toward individuals within that group (Dovidio et al., 2010). Forms of discrimination vary, with direct discrimination occurring when individuals face overtly unfair treatment, such as being denied employment solely due to race or gender (Schmitt et al., 2014). Nevertheless, indirect discrimination refers to seemingly neutral policies that disproportionately disadvantage certain groups. For instance, a workplace policy that mandates challenging working conditions may affect individuals with caregiving responsibilities, particularly women with young children (Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Siriwan, 2024). Organizational policies and practices embed institutional discrimination, a systemic form of bias, perpetuating long-term disadvantages for marginalized groups. Examples include educational or corporate practices that restrict access to resources or promotional opportunities for minorities (Feagin, 2006).

Discrimination has far-reaching impacts on both individual and societal levels. For individuals, it can lead to negative psychological effects, including low self-esteem, stress, and depression, impacting overall well-being and hindering personal development (Schmitt et al., 2014). Societally, discrimination exacerbates social inequalities, reinforces class divisions, and often incites social conflict, obstructing economic and social progress by limiting the potential contributions of all members (Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Several theories provide insights into the mechanisms behind discrimination. Social Identity Theory, introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979), suggests that individuals are prone to favor their own group over others as a way of

reinforcing group identity and self-esteem, often at the expense of outgroups. Realistic Conflict Theory by Sherif (1967) posits that discrimination arises from competition between groups for limited resources, leading to conflict and intergroup hostility. Strategies to mitigate discrimination focus on fostering intergroup understanding and acceptance, facilitating meaningful cross-group interactions, promoting training programs to increase awareness, and enforcing policies rooted in equity and fairness. Such measures are essential for reducing discrimination and achieving greater social equity, which, in turn, supports a more inclusive and harmonious society (Dovidio et al., 2010).

2.5. Theories and concepts on baby boomer elderly group

This concept explores the social, cultural, and economic factors that shape the quality of life and well-being of Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, in the context of aging. Key dimensions include demographic change, healthcare adaptation, financial stability, and social engagement. As the Baby Boomer generation has grown, significant shifts in population size and age structure have necessitated adjustments in healthcare and welfare systems to accommodate their needs (Hoff, 2008). Increased demand for these systems indicates the importance of innovative strategies to sustain financial support and healthcare services for an aging population. Moreover, Baby Boomers derive benefits from actively participating in meaningful activities that align with their skills and life experiences, fostering a sense of purpose and community belonging. Studies have shown that involvement in social and self-development activities enhances well-being, making such engagement crucial for happiness and mental health (Havighurst, 1961; Issahaku, 2022; Durongrattichai et al., 2022; Somboonboorana, 2023, 2024).

The process of gradual adaptation in older adults' lives is equally essential, as it allows for smoother transitions in maintaining familiar roles, responsibilities, and routines that help mitigate stress (Atchley, 2001). Baby Boomers increasingly seek services and planning that reflect their unique lifestyle and past experiences, supporting their physical, mental, and social well-being. Prioritizing preventive care, positive health behaviors, and supportive counseling can significantly elevate their quality of life (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Economic stability, particularly related to retirement and post-retirement income, is a central concern for this group. Financial planning and investments, such as part-time work or small business ventures, provide a sense of security and independence, enhancing life satisfaction in later years (Cahill et al., 2005). All these factors illustrate a comprehensive approach to supporting Baby Boomers, emphasizing the importance of integrated social, healthcare, and financial systems to ensure they age with dignity and well-being.

2.6. The context of the program in community development

Department of Community Development (2022) describes the program as an integration of interdisciplinary theoretical knowledge and multi-professional practical skills aimed at producing graduates equipped with academic expertise, professional competence, and strong moral values. The program emphasizes self-directed learning and leadership development, encouraging students to apply knowledge in ways that sustainably empower local communities toward self-reliance. Through the curriculum, students gain insights into philosophical and theoretical frameworks, as well as methods, techniques, and strategies essential for managing community development. Moreover, the program fosters practical skills and a positive attitude for effective community work, preparing graduates to pursue careers that align with the unique contexts and conditions of Thai society, ultimately enabling them to work in harmony within local communities.

2.7. Related research

Assatarakul et al. (2024) identify key aspects of ageism toward the elderly, including physical changes, belief systems, cognitive mechanisms, societal expectations, and emotional regulation, highlighting prejudice and discrimination against older adults. Pathrapoowanun et al. (2023) observe that ageism manifests in social ridicule, with stereotypes like the "aunt-uncle" label expressing through gestures, behaviors, and emotional reactions. Yatniyom et al. (2022), and Durongrattichai et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of preparing for old age by maintaining physical health, managing finances, securing housing and caregivers, planning end-of-life matters, engaging in post-retirement work or activities, and fostering lifelong learning. Furthermore, Jirapongsuwan et al. (2017) indicate that post-retirement work enables individuals to apply their skills to benefit institutions while also developing themselves to adapt to changing times. These efforts help older adults maintain health, manage stress, and stay engaged in their professional fields.

2.8. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this research examines the behavior of elderly teachers within the Baby Boomer generation and explores ageism directed toward these teachers from the students' perspective. Drawing on the frameworks of Assatarakul et al. (2024), and Lang et al. (2002), the study incorporates key dimensions to structure its analysis: Physical changes, Beliefs and values, Cognitive mechanisms, Societal expectations, and Emotional management. These components provide a comprehensive lens through which to assess how age-related factors influence perceptions and interactions in educational settings, particularly focusing on how students view and respond to the age-specific characteristics of Baby Boomer

educators. This framework aims to uncover insights into the intersection of ageism and the evolving roles of older teachers, addressing both the challenges and contributions they bring to academic environments.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research to provide a comprehensive analysis of student perceptions of Baby Boomer teachers. The quantitative component focused on assessing the behavioral levels of elderly teachers from the students' viewpoint, while the qualitative aspect explored ageism directed toward these teachers. Data collection occurred from August 1 to December 31, 2024, within the Community Development Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University (REC 034/67), ensuring adherence to ethical standards in conducting research involving human participants.

3.2. Population, sample, and key informants

The population for this study comprised 408 students enrolled in the Community Development Department within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University (Office of Academic Promotion and Registration, 2024). Based on Krejcie and Morgan's table for sample size determination, we selected the sample from the same department, resulting in a final sample of 202 students (Bunmak, 2021). Key informants were purposively chosen, including student leaders and committee members from the Community Development Department across four academic years. Three representatives from each academic year were selected, totaling 12 individuals, to provide in-depth insights into students' perspectives on ageism and the behavior of Baby Boomer educators.

3.3. Research tools

To assess the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer generation from students' perspectives, a questionnaire was developed following several key steps. First, relevant concepts and theories on the behavior of Baby Boomer teachers were reviewed from books, documents, and research, forming a conceptual framework aligned with the study's content and objectives. Based on this framework, the questionnaire was structured into three sections:

Section 1 gathered general demographic information, including respondents' gender and age.

Section 2 focused on evaluating the behavior level of Baby Boomer teachers as perceived by students, using a 5-point Numerical Rating Scale where 5 = Very High, 4 = High, 3 = Moderate, 2 = Low, and 1 = Very Low (Bunmak, 2021), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 5-point Numerical Rating Scale.

Key Point	Details
5	Very High
4	High
3	Moderate
2	Low
1	Very Low

Source: Bunmak (2021).

The behavior level interpretation criteria were: 4.51-5.00 = Very High, 3.51-4.50 = High, 2.51-3.50 = Moderate, 1.51-2.50 = Low, and 1.00-1.50 = Very Low (Bunmak, 2021), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The behavior level interpretation criteria.

Key Point	Details
4.51-5.00	Very High
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low
1.00-1.50	Very Low

Source: Bunmak (2021).

Section 3 included open-ended questions for additional insights and suggestions. Following the creation of the questionnaire, five experts reviewed it to evaluate content accuracy and structure, with items meeting an IOC index of 0.80-1.00 selected for further testing. A pilot test was conducted with 30 participants who shared characteristics with the main sample group but were not included in it. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, resulting in a reliability



score of 0.909 (Cronbach, 1990). After validation, the questionnaire was finalized, printed, and distributed to the sample for data collection in the study.

To examine ageism toward elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group from the students' perspective, two primary qualitative research instruments were employed: an interview guide and observation notes. The interview guide facilitated in-depth discussions with key informants to gather nuanced insights into students' perceptions of ageism toward Baby Boomer educators. The development process began with a review of relevant concepts and theories on ageism from literature and research, forming a conceptual framework aligned with the study's objectives. Based on this framework, the interview guide was structured into three sections: Section 1 collected general demographic information about the interviewee, Section 2 focused on exploring specific aspects of ageism directed at Baby Boomer teachers, and Section 3 addressed issues and elicited suggestions for improvement. To ensure the instrument's quality, advisors and experts reviewed the interview guide, offering feedback that was incorporated to refine the questions for clarity and relevance before conducting interviews. Besides, observation notes were used to enrich the data collection process. The researcher employed both participant and non-participant observation methods. During participant observation, the researcher joined activities with the study group to gain first-hand insights, while in non-participant observation, the researcher observed interactions and behaviors from an external perspective, without engaging directly in certain activities. These observations provided a contextual understanding of students' attitudes and behaviors related to ageism, supplementing the interview data for a more comprehensive analysis.

3.4. Data collection

For the quantitative study on the behavior level of Baby Boomer teachers, the researcher-initiated data collection by personally contacting participants to explain the study's objectives, benefits, and procedures to gain their cooperation. Participants received the questionnaire in advance to prepare, and the date, time, and location for data collection were arranged, with official approval from relevant authorities and a formal permission letter delivered to the sample group. Data collection was conducted on the scheduled date at the participants' residences, in a single session lasting 10-15 minutes, between 1:00 pm and 6:00 pm. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were encouraged to complete the questionnaire independently. Responses were reviewed for accuracy, and confidentiality was strictly maintained, with participants given the option to omit information as desired. Any discomfort reported by participants was addressed, resulting in the successful collection of all 202 questionnaires, achieving a 100% response rate, with data verified for accuracy.

For the qualitative study on ageism toward elderly Baby Boomer teachers, the researcher similarly began by personally contacting participants to explain the research objectives, benefits, and procedures, seeking their cooperation. An information document was provided for pre-interview preparation, and the date, time, and location of each interview were arranged. Approval for data collection was obtained from Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, and an official permission letter was presented to key informants. The researcher prepared by reviewing the interview guide and organizing essential equipment, including a voice recorder and notebook. In-depth interviews were conducted as scheduled at informants' residences, lasting 1-4 hours, typically on weekends or holidays between 1:00 pm and 6:00 pm. The researcher used the interview guide to steer the discussion and obtained informed consent, confirming participants' understanding and securing permission to record audio and video, with assurances of confidentiality. Participants were given the option to withhold any information they preferred not to record, and privacy was maintained throughout. Participants were encouraged to report any discomfort, ensuring an ethical and respectful approach to data collection, and the researcher asked all participants for their consent, this consent was written.

3.5. Data analysis

For the quantitative analysis of the behavior level of Baby Boomer teachers, demographic information from Section 1 of the questionnaire, such as gender and age, was processed using statistical software, with results reported in frequencies and percentages. Section 2, which assessed the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group, was analyzed by calculating mean values and standard deviations to provide a clear understanding of participant responses. In the qualitative study on ageism toward Baby Boomer teachers, data collected from in-depth interviews with key informants underwent content analysis. Key points from the interviews were summarized, categorized into thematic areas, and presented through descriptive analysis, highlighting essential insights into students' perspectives on ageism.

4. Results

4.1. The behavioral traits of elderly teachers from the baby boomer generation

Physical changes: Students rated the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group regarding physical changes at an overall moderate level ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.21$). Within this category, the highest-rated aspect was a decline in appearance and image, which also received a moderate rating ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.23$). Following this, work performance was rated at a similar moderate level ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.11$). The aspect with the lowest average rating was a decline in physical health, though it remained within the moderate range ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.29$). These ratings suggest that although students

perceive moderate physical changes in Baby Boomer teachers, no single aspect was rated as particularly low or high, indicating a balanced view of physical changes in this group.

Beliefs and values: Students rated the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group in terms of beliefs and values at an overall high level ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.05$). Among specific items, the highest-rated characteristic was the use of power associated with high self-confidence, which received a high rating ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.07$). This was followed by "interest in others and self-centeredness," which was also rated at a high level ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.09$). The lowest-rated item, though still within the high range, was "reluctance to change" ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.99$). The results indicate that students perceive Baby Boomer teachers as generally confident and influential in their beliefs, with some hesitancy toward change, though all attributes were positively rated within the high range.

Cognitive mechanisms: Students' opinions on the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group were, overall, rated at a moderate level ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.22$). Among individual items, the highest-rated was the speed or slowness of thinking, which received a moderate rating ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.13$). This was followed by "thinking in the same old way and being unwilling to change," which also held a moderate rating ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.31$). The tendency to justify one's reasoning inappropriately was similarly evaluated at a moderate level ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.25$). The lowest-rated item was cognitive impairment, which remained within the moderate range ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.14$). The analysis results reflect students' perception of cognitive factors in Baby Boomer teachers, indicating a generally moderate view of age-related cognitive behaviors.

Societal expectations: Overall, students rated the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group in relation to societal expectations at a moderate level ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.10$). Among the individual items, "being calm or composed" received the highest rating, at a high level ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.88$). This was followed by "being a source of experience for people of other age groups," which was rated at a moderate level ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.00$). The item "not being involved in other people's matters" was also rated at a moderate level ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.25$). The lowest-rated item was the expectation for elderly individuals to remain primarily at home or in a temple, which remained within the moderate range ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.16$). It seems that though students acknowledge certain high expectations, such as composure, they perceive most societal expectations of Baby Boomer teachers as moderate, reflecting a balanced view of their roles and influence in broader social contexts.

Emotional management: Students rated the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group in terms of emotional management at an overall moderate level ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.22$). Among individual items, "mood swings" received the highest rating within the moderate range ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.26$). This was followed by "the inability to manage emotions appropriately in certain situations," also rated at a moderate level ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.17$). "Having intense emotions or irritation" similarly fell within the moderate range ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.17$). The lowest-rated item was "feeling sad or depressed," which still registered at a moderate level ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.23$). The findings point out that students perceive moderate levels of emotional variability among Baby Boomer teachers, but they do not view any single aspect as particularly high or low, indicating a balanced perception of emotional management in this group.

Overall: Students rated the behavior level of elderly teachers from the Baby Boomer group at an overall moderate level ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.18$). Among the individual aspects, "Beliefs and values" received the highest rating, at a high level ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.05$). This was followed by "Physical changes," rated at a moderate level ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.21$), and "Societal expectations," also at a moderate level ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.10$). "Cognitive mechanisms" was rated moderately as well ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.22$), while "Emotional management" received the lowest average, though it still fell within the moderate range ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.22$). These results note that students perceive a balanced and generally moderate behavior level across various aspects of Baby Boomer teachers, with "Beliefs and values" standing out as the most positively rated area, as shown in Table 3.

4.2. Ageism towards elderly teachers from the baby boomer generation

Physical Changes and Student Empathy : Students' attitudes toward the physical changes in elderly teachers reflected an understanding that aging is a natural process affecting both physical and mental capacities. Many students demonstrated empathy, particularly when teachers faced challenges with technology or experienced reduced physical agility. Students generally viewed these changes as acceptable and adapted their support as needed: **Understanding of Technological and Physical Limitations:** Most students recognized that elderly teachers sometimes struggled with adapting to modern technology, such as using computers or online teaching tools. One student noted, "The teacher isn't very good with computers, so students can help guide them" (P10, interviewed on November 13, 2024), indicating students' willingness to assist elderly teachers with respect and empathy. Students understood that age-related physical changes could affect mobility, with some describing teachers as "less agile." However, most students did not see this as a barrier to teaching, believing that teachers' experience and skills compensated for any decrease in agility.

Attitudes Toward Emotional Changes: Some students acknowledged mood fluctuations in elderly teachers and expressed empathy toward these emotional shifts, attributing them to the natural aging process. Students occasionally observed, "When the teacher is in a bad mood, they take it out on students" (P1, interviewed on November 13, 2024), viewing such reactions as normal and often influenced by fatigue. Students who understood this were willing to adjust, accepting it as part of the teaching environment and respecting teachers without expecting behavioral changes. **Acceptance and Empathy**

Regarding Health and Capabilities: Many students expressed a respectful attitude toward the health challenges that elderly teachers might face. For example, one student commented, “Some teachers are older, so they need more rest” (P2, interviewed on November 13, 2024), reflecting an understanding of the health needs associated with aging. Students admired the teachers’ dedication despite age-related challenges and valued their experience and knowledge as beneficial to the learning experience.

Table 3 The behavioral traits of elderly teachers from the baby boomer generation (n = 202).

Key Point	Means	Standard deviations	Level
Physical changes			
- A decline in appearance and image	3.41	1.23	Moderate
- Work performance	3.39	1.11	Moderate
- A decline in physical health	3.25	1.29	Moderate
- Overall	3.35	1.21	Moderate
Beliefs and values			
- The use of power associated with high self-confidence	3.77	1.07	High
- Interest in others and self-centeredness	3.63	1.09	High
- Reluctance to change	3.61	0.99	High
- Overall	3.67	1.05	High
Cognitive mechanisms			
- The speed or slowness of thinking	3.39	1.13	Moderate
- Thinking in the same old way and being unwilling to change	3.19	1.31	Moderate
- The tendency to justify one's reasoning inappropriately	3.12	1.25	Moderate
- Cognitive impairment	3.05	1.14	Moderate
- Overall	3.19	1.22	Moderate
Societal expectations			
- Being calm or composed	3.63	0.88	High
- Being a source of experience for people of other age groups	3.36	1.00	Moderate
- Not being involved in other people's matters	3.21	1.25	Moderate
- The expectation for elderly individuals to remain primarily at home or in a temple	3.14	1.16	Moderate
- Overall	3.33	1.10	Moderate
Emotional management			
- Mood swings	3.42	1.26	Moderate
- The inability to manage emotions appropriately in certain situations	3.22	1.17	Moderate
- Having intense emotions or irritation	3.06	1.17	Moderate
- Feeling sad or depressed	3.00	1.23	Moderate
- Overall	3.17	1.22	Moderate
Overall of Behavioral	3.32	1.18	Moderate

Impact of Physical Changes on Teaching: Some students recognized that physical changes might slightly impact the pace of teaching, such as occasional delays or repetition. However, they viewed this as a minor issue. One student remarked, “I don’t think a teacher’s physical condition is an obstacle in teaching. Everyone changes with time” (P1, P2, and P4, interviewed on November 13, 2024), demonstrating students’ patience and respect for the teachers’ abilities and willingness to engage with lessons at a comfortable pace. **Positive Attitudes Toward Experience and Knowledge of Elderly Teachers:** Many students appreciated the extensive experience and knowledge that elderly teachers brought to the classroom. They noted that “when studying with an older teacher, they usually make subjects easier to understand” (P3 and P10, interviewed on November 13, 2024), as elderly teachers could simplify complex topics and use effective teaching techniques. Students found learning from elderly teachers enriching, without perceiving them as a hindrance to their education.

Beliefs and values: Students’ beliefs and attitudes toward elderly teachers reflected a strong sense of respect and admiration, acknowledging these teachers’ experience and expertise across many areas. Students valued elderly teachers for the perspectives and problem-solving approaches grounded in life experience, which provided valuable insights for students’



futures: Beliefs Based on Life Experience: Elderly teachers often held beliefs shaped by extensive life experience, which students found meaningful. One student remarked, “Teachers have been through things before, and listening to their teachings is best” (P10, P11, and P12, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Students believed that these experiences contributed to deep, thoughtful approaches to complex issues, as teachers had often faced similar challenges and could offer model solutions. **Appreciation of Knowledge and Ability:** Students expressed admiration for the knowledge and capabilities of elderly teachers, who conveyed content with depth and broad perspective. One student shared, “It is of great value that teachers provide opportunities and share good things” (P5, P6, and P10, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Teachers’ real-life experiences inspired students and provided a foundation for preparing for their careers. **Problem-Solving Through Real-Life Experience:** Students valued the practical problem-solving methods that elderly teachers offered, based on their own life experiences. One student observed, “Teachers have effective problem-solving methods because they may have encountered similar situations” (P10, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Teachers’ examples and lived experience equipped students with strategies and tools applicable to real-world challenges.

Respect for Diverse Beliefs and Acceptance of Varied Perspectives: Students respected the beliefs of elderly teachers, recognizing that such perspectives resulted from a lifetime of learning. One student noted, “Teachers have diverse ideas and more knowledge than students” (P12, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Exposure to these varied perspectives broadened students’ understanding and enriched their approach to interconnected issues. **(5) Impact on Analytical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills:** Elderly teachers’ skills and experience helped students develop their analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Many students commented that “most elderly teachers have skills, knowledge, abilities, and expertise, which enable them to teach students to understand various subjects” (P4, P5, and P6, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Analytical thinking, an essential skill, was enhanced through learning with experienced teachers.

Learning From Real-Life Experience for Future Application: Students believed that elderly teachers’ real-world experiences provided lessons directly applicable to their own lives. One student stated, “I learn beliefs I didn’t know and experiences that I haven’t encountered before, which provides new knowledge” (P1, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Such exposure helped students understand real-world complexities, preparing them to meet future challenges and solve problems effectively. **Development of Respect and Appreciation for Experienced Individuals:** Students trusted elderly teachers as high-quality educators with valuable knowledge that supported their development. One student observed, “I believe that all teachers instructing students are of high quality” (P10 and P11, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Respect and appreciation for the teachers’ knowledge fostered a rich and supportive learning environment.

Cognitive Mechanisms: Students’ thoughts and expectations about elderly teachers, who may not always be up to date with modern technology, reflect their views on the teachers’ roles in balancing traditional knowledge with adaptation to contemporary changes. Many students anticipated that experienced elderly teachers could serve as effective advisors in navigating various transformations. Key insights are as follows: **Belief in Teachers’ Traditional Knowledge and Experience:** Students valued the depth of traditional knowledge and experience that elderly teachers brought, even if they occasionally faced limitations with modern technology. Some students noted, “Teachers have traditional knowledge to pass on for students to continue learning” (P10, interviewed on November 13, 2024). This teaching approach, based on accumulated experience, provided a solid foundation that students found valuable for their learning. **Teachers’ Adaptation to Global Changes:** Students appreciated elderly teachers who embraced contemporary changes. As one student observed, “It’s beneficial for both teachers and students to adapt to different aspects of the modern world” (P2 and P9, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Teachers who adapted to new developments made lessons feel more relevant, engaging, and applicable to real-life contexts.

Views on Modernity and New Knowledge Among Elderly Teachers: Even though students acknowledged that elderly teachers might not appear as modern as younger ones, they still valued the quality of instruction and experience that elderly teachers provided. One student remarked, “Elderly teachers tend to teach better than younger or less experienced teachers” (P8, interviewed on November 13, 2024), indicating that students appreciated the depth of experience as much as modernity in teaching. **Listening and Knowledge Exchange Between Teachers and Students:** Students expected elderly teachers to remain open to new ideas and the experiences students brought. One student reflected, “It’s important to share and listen to the experiences students face, as times have changed” (P6, interviewed on November 13, 2024). An open exchange between teachers and students encouraged broader perspectives, aiding students in adapting to a modern era.

Impact on Students’ Perspectives and Learning: Learning from the well-rounded perspectives of elderly teachers inspired students and helped them develop essential skills for a rapidly changing world. One student explained, “I feel more equipped to handle modern changes because elderly teachers have mechanisms of thought, perspectives, and insights on new shifts in thinking” (P3, P4, P11, and P12, interviewed on November 13, 2024). This boosted students’ confidence, preparing them to apply their knowledge effectively in future contexts. **Role of Elderly Teachers as Advisors and Mentors:** Students viewed elderly teachers as valuable advisors and mentors in confronting challenges and navigating change. One student shared, “Elderly teachers can help students foresee change trends clearly and know how to adapt to those changes” (P8, interviewed on November 13, 2024), emphasizing the importance of teachers’ accumulated experience in preparing students for future changes. **Importance of Integrating New Knowledge in Teaching:** Although elderly teachers might face limitations with technology, students believed that “every teacher, regardless of age or physical change over time, can incorporate new

knowledge in teaching” (P1 and P11, interviewed on November 13, 2024). This perspective highlighted respect for teachers’ commitment to adapting and self-improvement, meeting the demands of the modern world.

Societal Expectations: Students viewed elderly teachers as exemplary role models in ethics, morals, knowledge, and experience, recognizing their crucial role in fostering positive attitudes and inspiring future careers. Key expectations are detailed below: **Elderly Teachers as Models of Ethics and Morality:** Students expected elderly teachers to embody ethical and moral values, seeing them as “respected mentors” due to their life experience and guidance. One student noted, “Elderly teachers, especially those at the professor level, often have an understanding of modern society” (P11, interviewed on November 13, 2024), emphasizing the belief that teachers serve as moral role models who shape responsible individuals.

Leadership and Beneficial Guidance: Students expected experienced teachers to provide mental leadership and practical guidance, especially relevant in a rapidly changing world. Many students expressed, “Experienced teachers are well-prepared to handle new situations” (P10, interviewed on November 13, 2024), and hoped teachers would “serve as models in various areas for students” (P5 and P9, interviewed on November 13, 2024). Teachers’ awareness of current issues guided students in cultivating positive attitudes and readiness to meet challenges.

Inspiring Attitudes and Motivation: Students viewed elderly teachers as sources of inspiration, citing their life-tested perspectives and problem-solving abilities. Observing that “to succeed, one must have a good role model” (P8, interviewed on November 13, 2024) and that “having a good role model produces graduates who benefit society” (P9, interviewed on November 4, 2024), students acknowledged how this positive influence fostered personal growth and societal contribution. **Confidence in Learning from Elderly Teachers’ Knowledge and Experience:** Students valued learning from the academic and life experience of elderly teachers, seeing it as foundational for career readiness. One student noted, “The knowledge teachers share benefits students’ lives, so they should retain as much of it as possible” (P1, P4, P7, and P10, interviewed on November 13, 2024). This respect and confidence stressed the high value students placed on teachers’ wisdom.

Teachers’ Role in Shaping Socially Responsible Graduates: Students believed that elderly teachers’ positive example was vital in producing quality graduates. Recognizing the importance of knowledge, ability, and morality, students saw teachers as essential in cultivating valuable members of society. One student shared, “Experienced teachers can be role models for society” (P11, interviewed on November 4, 2024), adding that “a good role model produces graduates who contribute positively to society” (P9, interviewed on November 13, 2024). **Exemplifying Patience and Generosity:** Many students admired elderly teachers’ patience and generosity, considering them role models for life and work. Values such as patience and kindness instilled confidence in students, encouraging them to learn and live meaningful lives. One student remarked, “Each teacher has knowledge and provides good opportunities for students” (P1, interviewed on November 13, 2024), while another stated, “It’s beneficial because they can guide students effectively” (P10, interviewed on November 4, 2024). **Expectations for Building Relationships Between Teachers and Students:** Students hoped elderly teachers would be open and attentive, fostering positive relationships that enhanced understanding and effective learning. Some students expressed that “elderly teachers need to be particularly attentive” (P7 and P12, interviewed on November 13, 2024), indicating a desire for closer connections that build trust, boost confidence, and encourage active student engagement.

Emotional Management: Students perceived variations in emotional management among elderly professors, recognizing those who effectively control their emotions as positive role models in problem-solving, especially in complex or conflict-laden situations. However, some students felt that certain professors struggled with emotional control, which could lead to pressure or discomfort in the learning environment. Key insights are outlined below: **Effective Emotional Management as a Positive Example for Students:** Most students appreciated professors who managed their emotions well in challenging situations. Professors who refrained from showing anger or panic in problematic scenarios demonstrated how to face issues with calmness and reason. One student noted, “Not showing displeasure or reacting emotionally indicates a positive attitude” (P10, interview on November 13, 2024), suggesting that emotional composure was considered an essential quality in a good professor. **Listening and Clear Explanations:** Professors who actively listened to students’ opinions and provided clear, thoughtful explanations conveyed emotional control and understanding. One student remarked, “Professors listen to reasons and explain more thoroughly” (P2, interview on November 13, 2024). This approach fostered a positive relationship and built trust in the professor’s role.

Adaptability and Acceptance of Differences: Some students observed that certain professors struggled with adapting to modern changes, which could impact emotional management. Students felt that flexibility and openness to change improved the learning experience. One student commented, “There should be an exchange and acceptance of students’ experiences, as times are different” (P3, P4, P5, interview on November 13, 2024), emphasizing the importance of understanding students and embracing diversity. **Time Management and the Impact of Emotions on Teaching:** Some students noted that when professors failed to manage their emotions, it affected the teaching process and created discomfort. Poor time management, in particular, was seen as a source of pressure for students. One student suggested, “Professors should manage their emotions before meeting with students and better organize their time” (P4, P7, interview on November 13, 2024), highlighting the expectation for professors to prepare emotionally and manage time effectively. **Silence and Restraint in Inappropriate Situations:** Many students believed that remaining silent and refraining from expressing negative emotions were effective ways for professors to demonstrate professionalism. Professors who chose not to display anger in unsuitable situations taught students self-

control. As one student stated, “A professor's ability to manage emotions by remaining silent and not showing displeasure serves as a valuable example for students” (P12, interview on November 13, 2024).

Empathy and Understanding of Students’ Situations: Students valued professors who could control their emotions and show empathy when students faced challenges. Professors who displayed empathy and used polite language created a comfortable environment for students seeking advice. One student observed, “Using appropriate words and understanding elderly professors” (P9, interview on November 13, 2024), accentuating the importance of gentleness and understanding in difficult situations. **Understanding the Professor’s Role and Responsibility in Learning:** Students felt that professors who exhibited patience and emotional control exemplified the role of an educator. Professors’ dedication to teaching and providing constructive guidance inspired students’ appreciation for learning and supported personal growth. A student noted, “Acting in a way that aligns with expectations and serves as an example” (P8, P10, interview on November 13, 2024), reflecting students’ high expectations for professors to fulfill their responsibilities and model emotional control (as shown in Table 4).

Table 4 Ageism towards elderly teachers from the baby boomer generation.

Dimension	Key Themes	Student Perceptions and Attitudes	Implications
Physical Changes and Student Empathy	Aging-related physical and technological limitations; emotional shifts; teaching pace	Students showed empathy toward teachers’ reduced agility and technological challenges. They offered support, accepted slower pace, and viewed mood fluctuations as natural aspects of aging.	Indicates benevolent ageism: respect mixed with assumptions about decline, but overall a supportive learning atmosphere.
Beliefs and Values	Life experience, moral perspectives, real-world knowledge	Students admired teachers’ wisdom, moral grounding, deep knowledge, and life-tested problem-solving. They valued diverse perspectives and learning from real experiences.	Reinforces cultural respect for seniority; strengthens teacher student trust but may mask generational value gaps.
Cognitive Mechanisms	Traditional vs. modern knowledge; adaptation to change; mentoring roles	Students saw elderly teachers as blending traditional knowledge with varying levels of adaptation to modern technology. Viewed as advisors capable of guiding students through societal transitions.	Highlights trust in older teachers’ judgment, but maintains stereotypes that older generations are less modern or tech-ready.
Societal Expectations	Role-model status; leadership; moral authority; student development	Students expected elderly teachers to embody ethics, patience, generosity, and leadership. Teachers were seen as crucial in shaping responsible, high-quality graduates.	Reflects strong cultural norms around reverence for elders; places heavy expectations on older teachers to uphold moral and professional standards.
Emotional Management	Emotional regulation; stress response; empathy; communication	Students valued teachers who remained calm, patient, composed, and empathetic. Emotional instability caused discomfort. Effective listening and respectful communication were seen as essential.	Shows emotional management as a major measure of “good teaching”; reinforces idealized expectations of wisdom and self-control tied to age.

From the study’s findings, the researcher derived new insights summarized under the concept "E-L-D-E-R," aimed at supporting and promoting positive behaviors and characteristics of elderly professors that positively impact learning, as perceived by students. The following sections provide detailed insights based on this conceptual framework:

E - Experience and Expertise: Emphasizing the value of elderly faculty members' rich experiences, this component highlights how their knowledge guides and prepares students for future careers. Students recognize that learning from experienced faculty equips them with practical skills and insights valuable in their professional lives.

L - Learning Flexibility: Encouraging adaptability, this element supports elderly faculty in embracing new technology and modern teaching methods. Students are willing to assist by helping their teachers adjust to evolving educational tools and systems, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

D - Dignity and Respect: Reflecting students' respect and appreciation, this concept reflects the value they place on their elderly teachers' knowledge. Students view learning from these faculty members as integral to career preparation, benefiting from the dignity and wisdom that such teachers embody.

E - Empathy and Understanding: Promoting empathy, this aspect encourages students to understand their teachers' physical and technological limitations, fostering a compassionate approach. Students show readiness to offer support, such as introducing new technologies respectfully and with patience.



R - Role Model: Elderly faculty members are seen as role models, exemplifying ethics, moral integrity, emotional control, calmness, and attentive listening. Their demeanor contributes to a constructive and positive learning environment that inspires students and reinforces values essential for personal and professional development (as shown in Figure 1).



Figure 1 New knowledge in the form of “E-L-D-E-R.”.

5. Discussion

5.1. The behavioral characteristics of elderly teachers from the baby boomer generation

Physical changes: Students’ overall assessment of the behavior level of Baby Boomer faculty members was moderate, suggesting a balanced view that recognizes both the physical limitations and adaptability challenges often associated with aging. As Erikson’s theory of age-related change (1963) explains, elderly individuals may experience difficulties in adjusting to new methods of communication and technology, which can influence classroom management and the effectiveness of knowledge transmission. Despite these limitations, students placed significant value on the extensive experience and expertise that elderly teachers bring, viewing this accumulated knowledge as an asset that enhances both theoretical and practical learning (Guoliang et al., 2023). The moderate expectations reflect a nuanced understanding that, while elderly faculty may face certain challenges, they are nonetheless able to positively adapt within their roles, an idea consistent with Lang et al. (2002) concept of adaptation in elderly individuals within professional and social environments. Students’ support, alongside opportunities for elderly faculty to develop relevant skills, will promote an inclusive and effective learning atmosphere that accommodates current educational advancements, ultimately bridging generational gaps and reinforcing a positive, collaborative academic environment.

Beliefs and values: Students’ high rating of the behavior level of Baby Boomer faculty reflects a deep appreciation for the ethical values and extensive experience these teachers bring to the academic environment. This positive assessment emphasizes students’ perception of elderly faculty as role models who embody integrity and provide essential guidance, both academically and morally. According to Kohlberg’s theory of moral development (1984), individuals who exhibit high levels of moral reasoning and ethical standards serve as influential figures, encouraging respect and admiration from others. In this context, students recognize that the ethical conduct and social insight displayed by senior faculty members enhance their learning experience and provide a framework for understanding broader social and educational dynamics. Moreover, as Belenky et al. (1997) suggest, the cumulative experience and wisdom of elderly educators are assets that foster a supportive learning environment, empowering students to confidently seek advice and guidance. The students’ high evaluations of their Baby Boomer professors indicate a strong trust in these faculty members’ capabilities to serve as ethical exemplars, positively influencing students’ development as socially responsible individuals prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. This trust in the faculty’s role reinforces the importance of experience and ethical guidance in shaping students’ values, ultimately fostering a constructive and engaged academic community.

Cognitive mechanisms: Students’ moderate assessment of the behavior level of Baby Boomer faculty in terms of cognitive mechanisms indicates an appreciation for these teachers’ problem-solving and decision-making skills while also highlighting an expectation for continued growth in adapting to technological and social advancements. Piaget’s theory of cognitive development (1977) emphasizes that rational thinking and adaptability are vital for growth at every life stage, suggesting that for senior faculty, ongoing adaptation, especially in integrating new technologies into teaching remains essential. The moderate rating reflects students’ recognition of their instructors’ capability and extensive experience in making thoughtful decisions, as well as a hopeful anticipation that these faculty members will continue to enhance their cognitive

flexibility in response to changing educational and societal demands. Supporting this view, research by Jirapongsuwan et al. (2017) found that senior faculty members actively pursue relevant knowledge to enhance their professional capabilities and personal growth, which aligns with students' expectations for adaptability. Furthermore, Vygotsky et al. (1978) sociocultural theory and Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) work on perspective-taking suggest that exchanging ideas with students can serve as a valuable mechanism for fostering critical thinking and adaptability in both students and faculty. Such intellectual engagement benefits not only cognitive development in older faculty members but also enhances the collaborative learning environment, ultimately reinforcing the faculty's role in guiding students through both traditional and evolving educational landscapes.

Societal expectations: Students' moderate assessment of the behavior level of Baby Boomer faculty reflects a nuanced expectation that experienced teachers will balance their capabilities with an adaptability that aligns with today's societal and technological changes. As Kegan (1994), Josephine & Jones (2022) and Khaenamkhaew (2025, 2026), suggest, the evolving expectations around leadership and adaptability in educators influence students' confidence in their teachers, leading students to hope that faculty will exemplify contemporary social values and norms. This moderate rating reveals students' perception of senior faculty as role models who not only impart knowledge but also embody core beliefs and ethics, demonstrating a responsibility to nurture future socially responsible members. According to Zimmerman & Schunk (2001), Johnson & Kardos (2005) and Belenky et al. (1997), students' expectations for their professors' adaptability and commitment to integrating new skills into teaching practices are critical to fostering a collaborative and forward-looking educational environment. These perspectives reveal a dual expectation: while students respect the depth of knowledge that senior faculty possess, they also view adaptability and alignment with modern values as essential for meeting the demands of contemporary education. Ultimately, students look to senior faculty to navigate and model a balance between tradition and innovation, inspiring confidence that their education aligns with both academic integrity and current societal needs.

Emotional management: Students' moderate rating of the emotional management abilities of Baby Boomer faculty suggests that while many elderly teachers manage emotions effectively, some still face challenges in maintaining emotional control, particularly in high-stress or conflict situations. Emotional regulation plays a vital role in establishing a supportive learning environment, as teachers who skillfully manage their emotions can convey knowledge more effectively and positively influence classroom dynamics (Gross, 2002). Students hold a clear expectation that faculty members will consistently exhibit emotional control, modeling balanced responses even in challenging scenarios, which they see as essential for fostering a constructive educational atmosphere. Research by Goleman (1995) reinforces this expectation, demonstrating that emotional regulation not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also contributes to students' social and emotional development by providing them with an example of healthy emotional responses. Students appreciate an environment where teachers display their emotions in a measured and professional manner, thereby preventing unnecessary tension or discomfort. Consequently, honing emotional regulation skills is especially crucial for senior faculty, allowing them to serve as role models in emotional management and to foster a positive, resilient learning community.

Overall: Students' overall assessment of the behavior level of Baby Boomer faculty was moderate, reflecting a balanced view that encompasses both strengths and areas for improvement. The highest-rated dimension, Beliefs and Values, accentuates the significant role elderly teachers play in imparting ethical values and essential knowledge, which students view as foundational for their professional development and preparation for the workforce. This suggests a strong appreciation among students for the moral guidance and life experience that senior faculty members bring to the classroom. Other dimensions, such as Physical Changes, Societal Expectations, and Cognitive Mechanisms, received moderate ratings, indicating that students acknowledge certain limitations associated with age, including challenges in technological adaptability and situational flexibility. Nonetheless, Emotional Management was rated the lowest, though still at a moderate level, suggesting that some teachers may face challenges in managing emotions during difficult situations, which can influence classroom dynamics and student relationships. This aligns with Assatarakul et al. (2024) findings on societal attitudes toward elderly individuals, especially regarding physical, cognitive, and emotional attributes. Furthermore, Pathrapoowanun et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of fostering respectful and constructive attitudes toward diverse perspectives, suggesting that students should cultivate positive attitudes toward the unique contributions of elderly teachers. Yet, areas such as emotional regulation and adaptability to societal changes could benefit from further development among senior faculty members to enhance their impact as role models. Raising awareness about reducing age-based bias and discrimination, as indicated in the research, can help society and educational institutions support elderly educators in maintaining a positive and productive learning environment.

5.2. Ageism towards elderly teachers from the baby boomer generation

Physical changes: Students demonstrate a profound understanding and empathy toward the physical limitations experienced by elderly teachers, particularly in areas such as technological proficiency and physical health. This attitude reflects an open-mindedness and acceptance of the natural effects of aging, paired with a readiness to adapt to their teachers' evolving needs (Douwes et al., 2023). Many students are willing to support their elderly teachers by helping when needed and adjusting to teaching methods that accommodate these limitations. Such respect for teachers' knowledge and experience signifies a broader recognition of the invaluable insights they contribute to the educational environment, fostering a learning experience

rich in diversity and depth. Additionally, students express genuine concern for the health and well-being of their elderly educators, viewing them as essential contributors to the learning process whose presence enhances academic and personal growth. Yatniyom et al. (2022) emphasize that, as teachers age, ensuring their physical health becomes an integral part of maintaining educational quality, a sentiment reinforced by the work of Schunk & Dibenedetto (2020) and Ryff & Singer (2008). Health care promotion among elderly faculty is thus seen as a form of respect, demonstrating a collective hope that these educators can continue to fulfill their roles effectively. Ultimately, students' empathy and willingness to support their elderly teachers reflect a comprehensive understanding of the responsibilities, challenges, and limitations that educators face, reflecting a constructive and compassionate approach to the evolving educational landscape.

Beliefs and values: Students hold a great deal of respect and admiration for the value of elderly teachers, particularly for their deep and comprehensive experience and knowledge. This reflects an acceptance of the teachers' role in imparting knowledge derived from rare, firsthand experiences in the academic world (Almairi et al., 2021; Khaenamkhaew, 2025, 2026). Students recognize that the knowledge and skills gained from elderly teachers are especially valuable because they help build understanding and prepare students for real-world challenges in the future. This admiration and respect also demonstrate recognition of the teacher's role as a role model and a vital source of inspiration (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As a result, students have a positive attitude toward learning from experts with more experience, recognizing the value of experiential knowledge that cannot be solely learned from textbooks.

Cognitive mechanisms: Students have high expectations and great confidence that elderly teachers can be effective and valuable mentors. Although some teachers may not be proficient with modern technology, students recognize the value that these teachers bring through their experiences and insights gained from real-life situations, which can serve as lessons and guidelines for effectively addressing challenges (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Most students understand that, while technology plays an important role in education, the experiential perspective of teachers cannot be replaced. It remains a crucial mechanism for developing critical thinking skills and adapting to new situations. Having a mentor who understands the thinking process and offers perspectives based on real experiences is highly valued by students and helps prepare them for future changes (Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020).

Societal expectations: Students have a positive outlook and high expectations of elderly teachers as role models in ethics, morals, knowledge, and experience. This reflects the value and role of teachers as exemplary figures in living and working ethically. Students believe that learning from experienced teachers helps foster positive attitudes and prepares them to face future challenges in a rational and responsible manner (Almairi et al., 2021). Moreover, the close relationship between teachers and students creates a friendly and safe learning environment, which boosts students' confidence in expressing themselves and developing communication skills key abilities that help them grow into valuable members of society (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The expectation of teachers fulfilling their roles as role models is therefore a key factor in inspiring and guiding students' self-development.

Emotional management: Students have clear expectations regarding the emotional management of elderly teachers, hoping that teachers will serve as positive role models in controlling their emotions and responding to different situations. When teachers maintain composure and refrain from displaying negative emotions, it helps create a safe learning environment, encouraging students to learn and practice managing their own emotions (Gibson et al., 2010). Teachers' emotional control empowers students to confidently ask questions and express their opinions, a critical component of effective learning. Students also expect teachers to listen to their feedback and use polite language when communicating with them, which fosters a positive relationship between teachers and students and helps students develop rational and constructive communication skills. The calmness of teachers and their demonstration of understanding in various situations serve as important examples for learning about emotional regulation and mutual listening.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, students generally rated the behavior of Baby Boomer faculty at a moderate level, with the highest rating in Beliefs and Values, indicating strong respect for the ethical principles and extensive knowledge these teachers bring. Students empathized with the physical changes of elderly teachers, recognizing limitations related to technology and physical health, but valued their experience and were willing to assist where necessary. In Cognitive Mechanisms, students expressed confidence in the ability of elderly teachers to provide valuable mentorship, though some teachers' lack of technological proficiency was acknowledged. Societal Expectations were also rated moderately, with students seeing elderly teachers as role models in ethics and professionalism, recognizing the importance of learning from their experiences to build resilience and prepare for future challenges. Nevertheless, Emotional Management received the lowest rating, suggesting that students expect elderly teachers to model emotional control, patience, and effective communication. Overall, students appreciated the contributions of elderly teachers but emphasized the importance of further development in emotional regulation and adaptability to societal changes, highlighting areas for continued improvement to enhance educational experience.

7. Suggestions

The findings of this research indicate that the area of Emotional Management received the lowest average score, though it is still within the moderate range. Given the significance of emotional regulation in creating a conducive learning environment, it is essential to focus on enhancing the emotional management skills of elderly teachers. Improving these skills would not only help foster a more positive and supportive classroom atmosphere but also strengthen the relationship between teachers and students. This research accentuates the importance of understanding students' behaviors and attitudes toward elderly teachers, particularly those from the Baby Boomer generation, whose values and experiences may reflect the cultural and societal norms of previous eras.

Future studies should investigate the behavioral changes in students from the new generation, who have grown up in the digital era. This would offer valuable insights into how generational differences in experiences and social backgrounds affect interactions with Baby Boomer teachers, particularly in the context of teaching and learning. Understanding these dynamics could help bridge the gap between traditional teaching methods and the evolving expectations of today's students. Research should also focus on the communication behaviors and adaptability of Baby Boomer teachers in a technology-driven educational landscape. Given that technology plays an increasingly significant role in modern education, it would be beneficial to explore how Baby Boomer teachers have adjusted their teaching methods, attitudes, and communication strategies to meet the needs of digitally native students. Lastly, qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews or case studies, should be conducted to explore how Baby Boomer teachers can leverage their extensive experiences and wisdom in the context of the digital age. Understanding how they can adapt their knowledge to new technological and pedagogical advancements will provide further guidance on how to maintain their relevance and effectiveness as educators in a rapidly changing academic environment.

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8. Declarations

8.1. Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in full compliance with ethical research protocols, adhering to the official approval granted by Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, Thailand (REC No.034/67), which authorized the researcher's fieldwork. The authors utilized a generative AI tool, such as ChatGPT; however, it was only employed for translating Thai into English and for checking English grammar.

8.2. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The authors declare that the generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool [ChatGPT] was used exclusively for language editing and/or grammatical improvement. The use of AI did not influence the scientific content, study design, data analysis, data interpretation, results, or conclusions of the manuscript. Full responsibility for the content remains with the authors.

8.3. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

8.4. Funding

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