

Subtheme: Security

Stream: Rights of Older People

Ageism and Age Discrimination in India: a multi-level analysis

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This paper is based on 1) a content analysis of the main legal, policy and constitutional frameworks in India that address adults, 2) analysis of over 20 years of qualitative research undertaken in rural and urban South India. It demonstrates how older people are defined as exceptions, no longer competent adults with the rights of adults, but as frail and vulnerable people with needs rather than rights. The paper demonstrates how this ageist approach actively marginalises older people at discursive and practical levels, reinforcing age discrimination, and not only puts them in the back of the queue for state and family resources but makes it more difficult for them to hold onto their resources (income, assets, time), and less able to resist arguments that other's rights and needs are greater than their own. Suggestions for the means to strengthen older people's rights and to counter ageism will be offered.