

Bridging the gap: a development framework for assisting older persons

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...the true keynote of life is growth, not aging. Life does not grow old. So-called age is the deterioration of enthusiasm, faith to live, and the will to progress. (Dr. Lillian R. Dangott & Dr. Richard A. Kalish, "The Time to Enjoy the Pleasures of Aging", p. 9)

Introduction

"Lola" (grandmother) and **"Lolo"** (grandfather) are terms of endearment to us, Filipinos. We love them even if they are **"makulit"** (irritatingly repetitive). We defer to them because of their wisdom. We respect and sometimes fear them because they are strict. Grandparents, too, have time for us. They listen to our problems and misadventures. They sometimes protect us from our angry parents, empathize and cry with us when we are suffering from pain and laugh with us when we are joyful. But they too have stories to tell about their life experiences. They are Lola Basyang, conveying lessons and insights about what the world taught them. Thus, they become central in the reproduction of our own culture.

In our history books, we clearly see the evidently high regard for senior citizens. For instance, the male older persons in the barangay composed the Council of Elders. They were the political leaders who decided on critical issues affecting their constituents. They arbitrated in cases of disputes and interpreted the law in their own locality. This practice is still true especially in the culture of the indigenous peoples. The well-off elderly are also considered the patriarchs and matriarchs in a clan. They retain their power and influence until they bequeath this to another member or until they die. As part of the support system in the family, their assistance is also requested in the care of

their grandchildren when their children go out to engage in productive endeavors.

Situations, however, are changing. Many families are subjected to many complications in their existence. With the pressing economic problems affecting the Filipino households nowadays, couples as well as other members of the family have to earn a living. Working women can no longer be that available to look after their old and ailing parents or relatives. This limitation has been a tension point both for the children and the parents because the value of caring, as part of the debt of gratitude has a premium to us, Filipinos. In fact, it is an expectation of parents, especially from their daughters.

Present Construction about Older Persons

Words and meanings are also changing and with it, the regard or value for one's contribution in society. The productivity of an individual is recognized but up to a certain stage – 65, the age of retirement. No matter how alert one's mind is or how functional s/he still is, s/he is expected to retire from productive endeavors.

Many organizations are now promoting the view about the **dynamism of the youth**. For them, young blood infuses life and creativity to the group's existence. This high regard for them is seen in advertisements for job openings. A common criterion specified is the age limit. Opportunities for the training of personnel also limit the age of would-be participants. It supports the popular saying, "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks" which indicates a belief that older people can no more change their set ways nor learn something new. Unaware, these messages promote **ageism**, the marginalization, discrimination, and abuse of the elderly.

Manifestations of ageism in our present culture are embedded in our beliefs and practices as well as in our language. Many stereotyped notions have guided us in the way we relate with them. Thus, there are senior citizens who have been neglected or cut off from the mainstream of their family life because of their health condition. Family members oftentimes become so protective of them that a number of activities that give them a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction have been curtailed. They have been confined in the home with very limited interaction with other people. Grandchildren are spending less and less time with their grandparents because of the other activities available to them like mall, net surfing, movies, and discos. As a result, they no longer bond together as before. Thus, the centrality of the older persons' role in culture reproduction is diminished.

People nearing their golden years do not seem to look forward to this stage of their life. They experience **gerontophobia** or the fear of aging. Retirees, who have not been prepared for retirement or who have not realized the implications of being separated from what they have been doing for years, become depressed, irritable, and sometimes withdrawn as a result of lessened self-esteem and a strong feeling of insecurity.

about their future. From observation, too, one will note the increase in the number of people dyeing their hair because white ones are starting to grow. Many advertised products, from milk to vitamins, to soaps and cosmetics claiming to slow the aging process are now selling like pancakes in the market. The demand for these items seems to be great because many people especially women would like to look younger than their ages. Some willingly undergo surgical procedures to maintain their youthful look.

Filipino's Regard for the Elderly as Reflected in Language and Behavior

Our language and some of our customs manifest a strong respect for our elders. The use of "po" and "opo" as well as the kissing of their hand as a greeting are still practiced in our culture. There are however some terms that manifest ageism and have gender undertones. "*Gurang*", "*tanda*", and "*laos*" are some Filipino words meaning old. These terms are often used in the context of "making fun of" and connote a loss of something – ability – ("*makakalimutin*" or forgetfulness), speed ("*mabagal kumilos*" or slow foot), and attractiveness ("*laos*" or past one's prime, "*amoy lupa, mapanghi*" or having an unpleasant odor). Some typical notions about them are "*makulit*" or irritatingly repetitive, "*masungit*" or cranky, "*mahirap pakisamahan*" or difficult to get along with and "*nagmumurang kamatis*" or trying to appear young.

Gender issues also come into play in the lives of older persons. While the males can go out and be with their drinking buddies or other friends, the able women are still attached to reproductive responsibilities. They help in the chores at home as well as take care of their grandchildren. Men, who have lost their partners, can easily get another one because it is acceptable for them to court women of their desire. Moreover, their value as males does not diminish with age. On the other hand, widows are at the receiving end of affection. It is not acceptable for them to court the object of their interest. In addition, since women are regarded as commodities in our patriarchal society, they become less and less attractive (*luma*) as they grow older.

To a certain extent, families who are financially inadequate consider the care of their elderly a "pabigat" (burden) in terms of finances and time especially if they are "*sakitin*" (sickly) and "*alagain*" (someone needing care).

With these stereotypes, some people, especially the women, would not even admit that they are already grandmothers and grandfathers. They would like their grandchildren or the younger generation to call them "*Nanay*", "*Mama*", *Lola Mommy* or *Daddy*.

But is aging really a miserable stage in one's life? Do we have to battle with sickness and isolation and just wait for our time to come? Or do we have options?

Who are the Older Persons?

Older persons are those who belong to the age range sixty years old and above. They have undergone biological and physiological changes such as:

- ❖ Hormonal: lessened/no more supply of testosterone and estrogen
- ❖ Atrophy of the women's reproductive organs (ovaries and womb), vaginal dryness
- ❖ Lessened potency of men's reproductive organ

They are equipped with knowledge, attitude, skills and wisdom from life's experiences. Although quite a number of them may be physically or psychologically handicapped, they are productive people who can contribute to development and can lead satisfying lives.

The Older Persons' Construction About Their Situation

With the improvement of the health status of Filipinos, the lifespan of older persons has increased. Statistics from the Department of Health show that in the Year 2000 the elderly population comprised 4.5 of 75 million or 6.1% of the total population. By years 2020 and 2030, their projected number will increase to 10 million and 14.5 million respectively. Definitely, there will be implications in resource allocation and management including programs and services for them. In the review of related literature about maturing people, majority of the information available dealt with the senior citizens in hospice care. The local documents included some demographic data about this sector and a write-up about the different programs and services as well as legislations that would benefit them. There is however, a dearth of materials about how this group view their golden years and how they are coping with their situation.

With these information gaps, I was challenged to get more data about the situation of older persons and mainly from their points of view. I decided to conduct focus group discussions (FGD) with them in two areas - Binangonan, Rizal and Quezon City. The areas were selected based on their accessibility to the facilitator as well as their rural and urban characteristics. Binangonan is in the periphery of Metro Manila. It may be described as a semi-urban town because many of the amenities of the urban center can be found in the place. However, it has maintained quite a number of its traditional values and practices like the extended family system, high regard for older persons, the value of "utang na loob" or debt of gratitude, to name a few. Quezon City, on the other hand, is urbanized. With the fast pace of life in the city come changes in family values, beliefs, and practices. For instance, the household structure has become more and more nuclear and family members have succumbed to the influences of city life like individualism and consumerism, among others. The varying situations in these two areas would be con-

sidered when the older persons recount their experiences and share their opinions and insights in the course of the FGDs. I felt that this beginning endeavor is important because it can open other opportunities for more research undertakings on older persons.

The information that were gathered from the older people were:

- a. their concept of aging,
- b. their regard for themselves now that they are in this stage of their life,
- c. assistance they expect from their families, communities, and from the government,
- d. problems they have at present, and
- e. their hopes and dreams.

Some of the information shared by the elderly participants in a forum held in the College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines (CSWCD, UP) last December 2001 was also included.

Table 1. Profile of the Elderly Respondent (Demographic Data)

Variables	Binangonan Group (8)	Quezon City Group (3)
Age range	61 - 75	67 - 83
Religion	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic
Civil status	Married – 5; widows – 2; single - 1	Married – 1, widows - 2
Educational attainment	Elementary level – 4 High school level – 1 College level – 1 College graduate - 2	Elementary level - 3
Occupation	Self – employed - 4	Self – employed -3

The elderly participants in Binangonan were a mixed group – five males and three females. They all belong to the federated Senior Citizens Association of that town. Their ages ranged from sixty-one (61) to seventy-five (75) years old. They are all Roman Catholics and this strong spiritual bonding with their Creator has provided the needed strength and fulfillment in their lives. In terms of their civil status, five are married while two are widows and one is single. Except for one who lives by herself, all the others still stay with their families – husbands, wives, unmarried and/or married children with their families. They, too, have varying levels of educational attainment. One female and three males reached the elementary level; one male got to high school; one female earned units in first year

College; and one male and one female graduated from the tertiary level. The two who were able to finish a course became employed in offices and upon retirement, are now receiving pensions.

All participants have previous occupations. Four participants, a dressmaker, a businessman, school janitor, and a fisherman are still involved in their productive endeavors and are bringing in income to the family, although to a limited extent.

The maturing people are all active in community work. In addition to being officers of the Senior Citizens Association, one male and one female are choir members in their Church; two are actively involved in religious organizations; one male is a barangay official and two females belong to social groups, one as an adviser.

In Quezon City, the three maturing women who participated in the focus group discussion belong to the same neighborhood. Their ages ranged from sixty-seven (67) to eighty-three (83) years old. They are all Roman Catholics. Two of them are widows while one is married. Their highest educational attainment is elementary. According to them, the Japanese war deterred them from pursuing higher education. Although they are living with their families or relatives, they work full time as vendors because they want to provide for their own needs. Presently, they are not affiliated with any organization.

The three maturing people who represented their sector in the CSWCD forum at the CSWCD are community /group leaders, organizers, and advocates. Two of them are women and one is a male.

Concept of Aging and Regard for Self

When asked about their concept of aging and their regard for themselves, being at this stage of their lives, their answers were varied, though the males and females were in agreement in many aspects.

The women recognized the need to be health conscious in order to live longer. They are gratified when they can help other people and undertake activities beneficial to the community. It gives them a sense of satisfaction and makes them feel younger and better (*parang teenager*). One woman also expressed her regard for herself by asking the question "*Nasaan kayo ngayon kung wala kami noon?*" (Where would you be now if we were not here before?) This is her way of acknowledging her role as a producer of life here on earth. In Quezon City the elderly women pride themselves for being healthy, up and about as well as for their ability to still provide for themselves.

The men, on the other hand, are more philosophical when they look at the stage they are in. They recognize aging as brought about by time, time moving forward, and time

advancing. One also said that this concept is determined by the environment. Thus, the regard for them changes with time. One has to be flexible in order to enjoy this phase of one's life.

The forum participants appear to have a high self-esteem. Aling C. shared that since she became a community organizer, she never stopped her effort in developing herself. *"Patuloy ang aking pagbabasa, pag-aanalisa at paglalagom ng karanasan at pagbabahagi ng aking kaalaman sa iba"* (I continue to read, analyze and systematize my experiences and share them with others.) According to her, her mind is as sharp as ever. In fact, she looks younger than her age. She also said that at her age, the bullies and the alcoholics in their barangay listen to her because her leadership is very much accepted. She has become the *"tagapayo"*, *"tagapamayapa"* (counselor, arbiter) in their area. Aling A., on the other hand, has been very active in organizing work. A recognized leader in their own community, she has devoted her time helping an NGO implement their programs for maturing women. Mang R. stays in an institution for the elderly. Because he is still able, he assists the staff in working for their welfare. In the course of his work there, he fell in love with one of the elderly women in the institution, courted her and recently got married.

The participants' concept of aging is thus compatible with the growth theory which looks at maturation as a stage of further development and living life to the fullest. The older persons' high regard for themselves and their contribution to others and their community goes to show that the advancement in age is not a deterrent in pursuing higher goals in life. One factor that contributes to their high self-esteem is their productivity and economic independence. Their children still ask for financial support even though they already have their own families. Those who belong to organizations seem to be more confident and fulfilled because they can extend assistance to and make other older persons happy. They are a living proof that people can enjoy their existence at present as they did in their youth because they have a positive attitude towards their own personhood. Their noticeably strong faith in a higher Being has inspired and motivated them to go through life's challenges with confidence.

Family's and Community's Regard of Them

Although majority of the participants responded that they are regarded with respect especially because they are still helping their children financially or through their services, there were a few who verbalized their perception that their children and grandchildren sometimes make them feel that they are a burden to the family. They become very sensitive to this. *"Napakasakit kung minsan."* (It hurts sometimes.)

Quite a significant number of them noted the actuations of the younger generation, particularly their *"apo"* and sometimes their own children who answer them back with

disrespect. To them, this behavior is unthinkable because during their time, a look from their parents ("*nakukuha sa tingin*") meant that they should stop arguing or they must obey.

Kissing the hand of older persons as a sign of respect ("*pagmamano*") is not as widely practiced as before especially in urban areas. Family togetherness has not been sustained because it is not realistic anymore to expect household members to be at home by 6 o'clock for the "*orasyon*" or prayer. The FGD participants long for the revival of these practices that manifest the high respect accorded to them by the younger generation.

The answers of the older persons revealed that, to a large extent, their families still hold them in high esteem because of the support that they provide to their respective families. Some, though, have the perception that they are becoming a burden to their households. Others also mentioned that they are treated with disrespect by their children and grandchildren.

For the older persons who belong to a community and are doing community work, their responses indicated that their assistance to people have been very much appreciated. They have been accorded the respect that they deserved and the recognition of their able leadership in their community.

Problems and Fears of Older Persons

When asked about their problems and fears, two males in the Binangonan group and the females in the Quezon City group verbalized that their household members seemed unwilling to assist them, "*kinatatamarang pagsilbihan*", *hindi ka maaasikaso ng anak mo*", "*mapapabayaan ka nila*". They recognize though, that the reason for this seeming neglect is their children's own families. Their children, especially their daughters, are also burdened with responsibilities in the home.

Another problem brought out by a female participant is the difficulty relating with daughters – in – law. They seem to expect the elderly to help in the house on a full time basis so as not to be considered a burden. Because of this pressure, she was therefore forced to leave their abode so that she will not be compelled to do something against her will or when she is not up to it. She expressed that she wants her time to be her own. Most of them also said that since they are aware that their health is slowly failing, they need money for medicines and other necessities. While many of them are still earning, their incomes are not adequate to meet their requirements.

One of their greatest fears is to be bedridden or incapacitated for a long time because they do not want to be a burden to their families. One female participant experienced caring for her husband for several years and she said that it was really very difficult to

be a caregiver. She is sure that her children will not be able to attend to her needs the way she did to her husband.

Aling C. encapsulated the situation of the elderly in an urban poor community:

- They are poor. They cannot find work even when they are still able and they have no access to social services.
- The grandmothers are usually the caregivers of their grandchildren. Because of their role, conflicts in disciplining arise between them at times. Moreover, they are oftentimes confined to their homes, narrowing their world as well as their perspectives.
- More often than not, their needs are not attended to because those of their grandchildren take precedence, such as their school fees, allowances, and supplies.

As reflected in their answers, the problems and fears of older persons revolve around the inadequacy of money to meet their needs and being bedridden. They repeatedly said that they do not want to encumber their families.

Expected Care from the Family, Community and the Government

Being organized, the Binangonan group and the elderly CO workers are knowledgeable about the legislated benefits for older persons. In fact, they verbalized the flaws in the implementation of the said laws. They also came up with a number of suggestions that the government and the community can undertake for their benefit.

- a. Provision of emergency financial assistance;
- b. Allotment of a budget for the allowances of the Senior Citizens Organizations;
- c. Free or 50% discount for the hospitalization of the elderly and a hospital which would serve only older persons;
- d. Increase in funeral / burial assistance; and
- e. Clarification about the use of the senior citizens' funds coming from the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) funds in their locality.

The participants from Quezon City are not members of any group at present. Thus, they are not aware of any benefit for the elderly. That being the case, they do not expect any assistance from the government or from the community.

From their families, both groups do not expect any assistance because they and their

families still help one another in whatever way they can. They prefer to be independent, taking care of themselves and their own needs. They are quite happy with their realization that they can still support themselves.

- ❖ The maturing people may have a basis for their desire to be independent and their avoidance to be bedridden because of the experiences of Golden Acres. This institution, in charge of the rehabilitation of the elderly and the provision of temporary shelter for the poor ones, finds it difficult to discharge those who have recovered. Families refuse to accept them despite of the social worker's effort to reunite them. The institution is thus constrained to take them in permanently and provide the necessary social services.
- ❖ Their experiences also show us that the concept of care for the older family members is changing with the concomitant slack in the economy of the Philippines. Thus there should be recognition of this factor as well as the introduction of interventions to address this concern.

The Hopes and Dreams of Older Persons

Most of the elderly want to have a longer life so that they can still help others, fulfill their mission, and accomplish God's plan for them. This, in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is the level of self-actualization where one devotes his/her life for others. This "other directedness" is more manifest in older persons who belong to a group. A female participant verbalized that her dream is to see her grandchild graduate from college, "*para makita ko ang aking pinaghirapan*" (to see the fruits of my labor). All of them also said that, if at all, they prefer a sudden death so that their families will be free from the burden of care.

Aling C. also enjoins the other maturing people to engage themselves in community activities, not just in the concerns of their grandchildren. They are mothers, too. They are nurturing. The community has a high regard for them. They are good in analyzing situations because of their wide experiences. Thus, communities which are suffering from poverty and injustice need their knowledge and skills.

Framework for Assisting Older Persons

A. Lens in Viewing Aging and Older Persons

As mentioned earlier, the construction of aging has changed through time. In the book entitled "*A Time to Enjoy the Pleasures of Aging*", Dr. Lillian R. Dangott and Dr. Richard A. Kalish noted some theories which were used in

looking at senior citizens and the process of aging. These theories of human development (1979:40-41) that they mentioned are:

1. Theory of Decline

What grows and ripens eventually decays and declines. The concept is borrowed from the natural sciences and is based on a biological analogy. This theory perpetuates the idea that disease is natural and expected in older persons because their organs are not efficiently functioning anymore. Moreover, their faculties are deteriorating.

2. Theory of Stability

Adults tend to stabilize after adolescence. Change occurs primarily through trauma or accident. This concept is primarily based on psychoanalytic thought. The subtle implication is that change is negative. Freud thought that identity is established by the end of childhood and produces fairly consistent behavior thereafter, modified largely by trauma or accident. This idea rationalizes the current belief that we cannot teach old dogs new tricks. A person thus reaches the brim of his/her development during adolescence. Thus, the capacities manifested will remain stable as one advances in age.

3. Theory of Environmental Determinism

Change is determined by the individual's ability to respond to his/her surroundings with few personality predispositions. Personality is shaped by, and is the sum of, the environment, including social experiences and roles. The concept also implies negativism in that the individual is molded by the environment, or by others, and is not in reality, one "individual". This perspective has been fostered, in part, by behavior modification. A corollary to the Theory of Stability, this concept looks at life and living as constantly adjusting to an objective reality, the pervading norms of society, "what should be or what is acceptable".

The first three theories seem to have rationalized the prevailing mainstream messages about the elderly. This is seen in the various myths perpetuated about old age. If we examine them, we will realize the role that these theories played in perpetuating prevailing stereotypes.

- ❖ Old people are helpless. They become intolerant. *Their sex organs are dried up. They can't understand youthful progress and are stuck in the past. Senility is judged an inevitable part of aging.*

- ❖ *Old age is looked upon as a period characterized by poor health, resistance to change, failing mental powers, physical decay, economic insecurity and dependency. (Dangott and Kalish:1979, 11-12)*

The theories of decline and stability have denied the maturing people the dynamism of life and have entrapped us into believing that senescence is a stage of physical and mental deterioration, where one just waits for his/her time to end. This view disempowers many senior citizens and incapacitates them to lead happy and fulfilled lives. They are forced to live as expected – withdrawn, hating the state that they are in and feeling empty, thus hastening their decline. Therefore, it is not surprising that many people are trying to deny or are having difficulty accepting that they are in their golden years.

A number of programs and projects developed by some government and non-government agencies and made available to this sector, are curative in nature and are geared towards health, hospice care, and case management including counseling for the neglected and abandoned. This is due to the fact that the condition of the elderly is linked to the advancement in their age rather than to their health condition and lifestyle when they were still young. Preventive and liberating interventions were not emphasized.

4. Theory of Growth

Adults have the ability to be self-actualizing throughout. Any age contains a potential for "maturity" (Vispo), "becoming" (Allport), development of the "creative self" and the striving for superiority (Adler), a "growing concept of self" (Jung), of "self-actualization" (Maslow, Rogers). Our natural development is toward growth; life is a process of expansion. This concept, more than any other, looks upon change as potentially positive.

With the facts given about older persons, the theory of growth provides a very positive outlook about this stage of a person's life cycle. This alternative paradigm espouses the belief that even as a person matures, s/he continues to develop and change for the better. Studies have shown that the significant works produced or created by quite a number of celebrities were in their advanced ages, thus, disputing the fact that being productive has a limit:

..... Giuseppe Verdi composed operas at 80, Bertrand Russell, an English philosopher, at 78 was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Albert Einstein....Robert Frost.... and George Burns, all had productive old age (1979:23).

On the local scene, Gregoria de Jesus or more popularly known as Tandang Sora, who helped make the Philippine Revolution an success, joined the Katipunan at 82. Celestina

Latonera, who is well in her seventies, is up to the present providing training and organizing communities in Quezon City. Former Senator Jovito Salonga, former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos are still very much active in the political scene. Mr. Chino Roces and former Senator Lorenzo Tanada, were then in their eighties but were very active street parliamentarians.

With the abovementioned examples, the empowering quality of this view becomes quite evident. It provides another option for the elderly to be proactive and contributing members of society rather than reactive, helpless individuals. It gives them the chance to work for their own happiness and that of others and to seek their own fulfillment. It also prepares them to accept death and dying as part of life. Moreover, this framework considers older people as a resource because their services can be utilized in assisting individuals and groups in need. It is strengthened by the results of researches conducted:

1. *Intelligence is relatively stable throughout life, unless the person is suffering from a health condition affecting her or his cognitive abilities ... Learning is possible at any age.*
2. *Physical activity can continue throughout a person's life ... Lifestyle and environmental/cultural factors, rather than age, are primarily related to the amount of activity in a person's life.*
3. *Creativity can occur at any age.*
4. *Individuals with more education have better health and appear able to adapt more successfully.*
5. *Personality does not change drastically with aging. People show a consistency throughout life. When personality does change, it is not directly the result of aging.*
6. *The sex drive and related behavior often continue well into the eighties.*
7. *Age is a poor index of the difference between people in their abilities to find pleasure in living and to experience happiness. (Dangott & Kalish, 1979: 18-19)*

B. Principles Guiding our Assistance to Older Persons

These are some principles that should guide development workers in assisting older persons:

1. A person who is born healthy will have a healthy old age if s/he leads a healthy lifestyle in a healthy environment.
2. Older persons can contribute significantly to the development process.
3. Older persons are creative and can still learn new skills.
4. Older persons can still undertake productive endeavors.
5. Older persons can work for their own happiness and seek their own fulfillment.

C. Problems and Issues Facing Older Persons

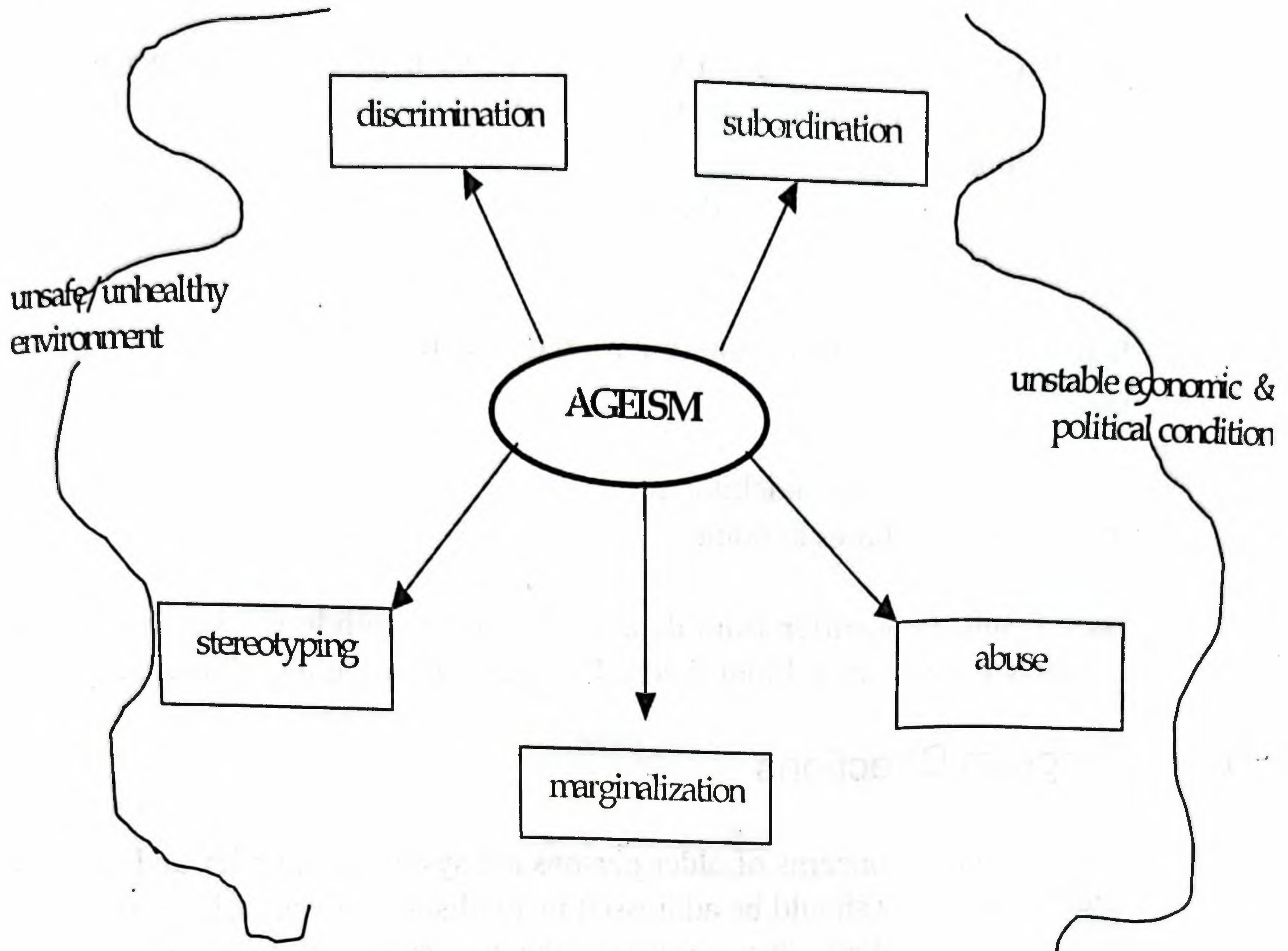
Researches have shown that older persons in general experience ageism which is the discrimination, subordination, marginalization and abuse of older persons because of stereotyped notions and myths about aging and older persons. These are culture-based and have been embedded in the minds of Filipinos.

The issues and problems of older persons, however, must be appreciated in the context of the prevailing economic and socio-political condition in the Philippines. For instance, retirement from economic activities can be seen in the light of competition over very limited resources. Thus, the younger ones are prioritized (given preferential treatment) over the more senior ones. Another example is care giving. This role is expected especially from the women in the family. But because they are now more involved in work outside the home, this becomes an additional source of tension in the family. Should this still be a household affair or should the state intervene? One cannot also discount the environment and its impact on the health status of older persons.

Discrimination refers to the prejudices experienced by older persons on account of their age.

- Putting age limit to educational opportunities
- Retiring people from work on the basis of age – 60 to 65 years old

Marginalization means that older persons have less control over benefits, privileges and services. Their capabilities or contributions are not recognized and appreciated.



- Because of the assumption that families take care of their older persons, programs and services addressing their specific needs are quite inadequate.
- This sector lacks the information needed to understand the physical changes that occur in their bodies.

Subordination refers to the lowering of people's regard for older persons.

- Considered weak due to physical/mental deterioration
- Overprotected, their mobility curtailed
- Excluded from decision-making processes in the family
- Social exclusion

Stereotyping refers to the pervading myths and notions about older persons which do not have bases.

- Physical deterioration
- Senility as natural among older persons
- Sexual inactivity
- Financial dependence

Abuse of older persons by caregivers can be manifested in several ways:

- Psychological/emotional abuse: isolation, neglect of older persons, absence of interaction with other members of the family, made fun of in terms of limited capacities
- Economic abuse: refusal to provide for needs of older persons
- Verbal abuse: threats, curses, shouting at them

Burden of reproductive function passed on to the elderly, especially to women

- Taking care of grandchildren
- Doing the chores at home

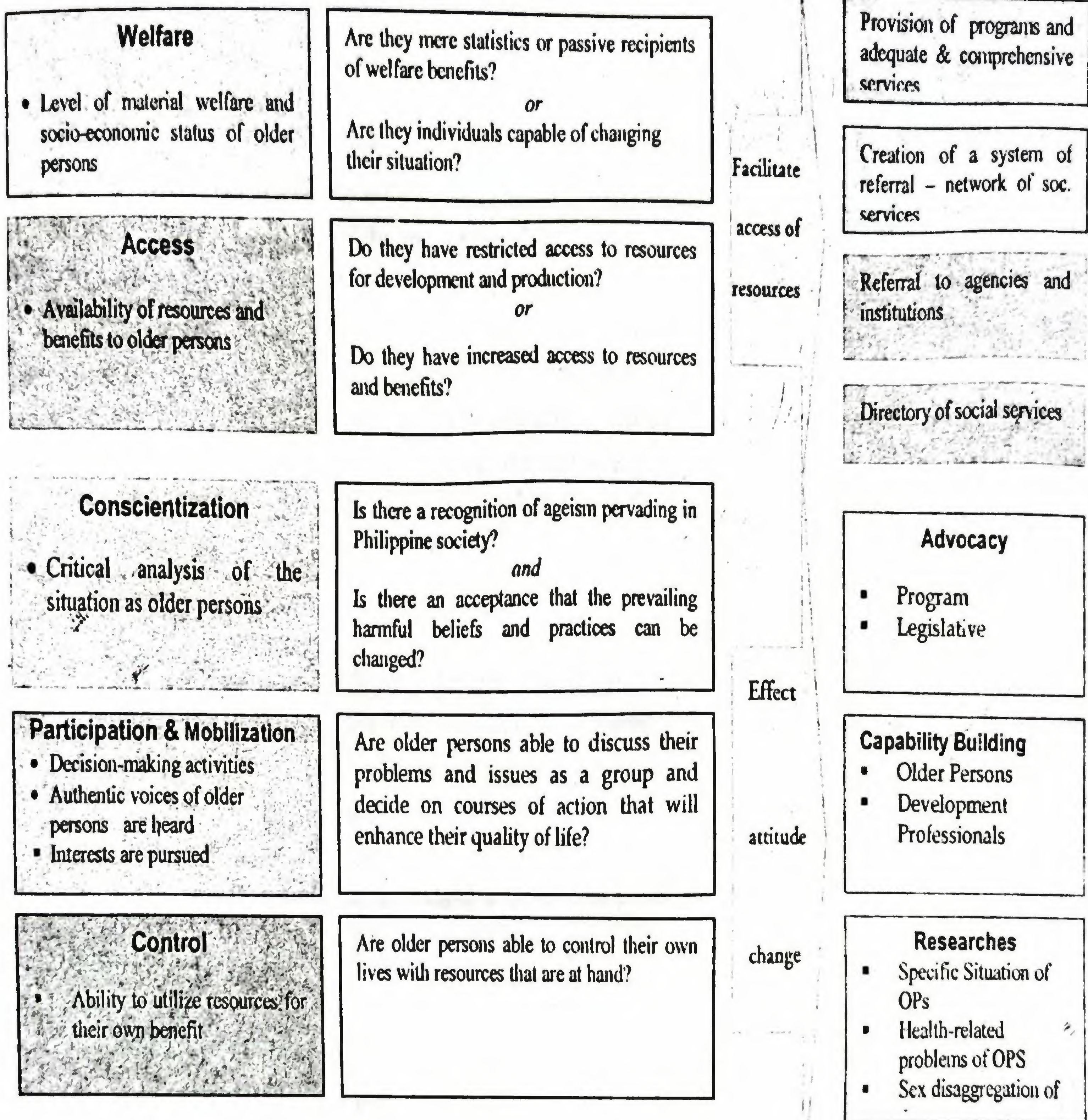
As a result, they suffer from depression. They withdraw, become overly sensitive because of a diminished self-esteem and a feeling of insecurity.

D. Program Directions

The issues and concerns of older persons are systemic, complex and interrelated. Thus, they should be addressed in a holistic manner, tackling the very root of their problem. This necessitates the provision of a continuum of interventions which must have a bias for older persons who belong to the lower strata of society. This implies varying levels of assistance/approaches that should be provided based on the needs of the sector. They range from curative/rehabilitative to preventive, developmental, and liberating. Concretely adopting Sara Hlupekile Longwe's "Equality and Empowerment Framework" will lead to a more comprehensive program direction. Thus, CSWCD is moving towards the empowerment of older persons. This means:

- Changing the regard of Philippine society towards older persons and looking at them as co-equal with other sectors and
- Assisting them to have access and control over resources and benefits.

Levels of Empowerment



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