

Student Attitudes toward Older Adults

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- Background
- Purpose
- Methods and sample
- Results
- Discussion
- Limitations

Background

- Aging of the American population
- By 2050, about one fifth of the population will be age 65 or older
- Illnesses increase with old age; almost half of all hospital visits are made by people 65 years or older.

Background, cont.

- Not enough people trained in geriatrics in the U.S.
- Geriatric nursing lacks appeal to many nurses and students

Background: Ageism

- Many people have negative attitudes toward aging and the aged.
- One theory is the terror management theory (TMT)
- Ageism is present at all levels of society, in the U.S. and other countries
- Older adults seen as physically or mentally deficient



Associated Factors

- Younger age
- Male gender
- Lack of experience with older adults

What has been done?

- Integration of gerontology material into curriculum
- Dedicated gerontology courses
- Instructors in both classroom and clinical setting
- Exposure to well elders



Purpose of Study

- Determine the attitudes of nursing students toward older adults and if they change over the course of the nursing program.

Methods

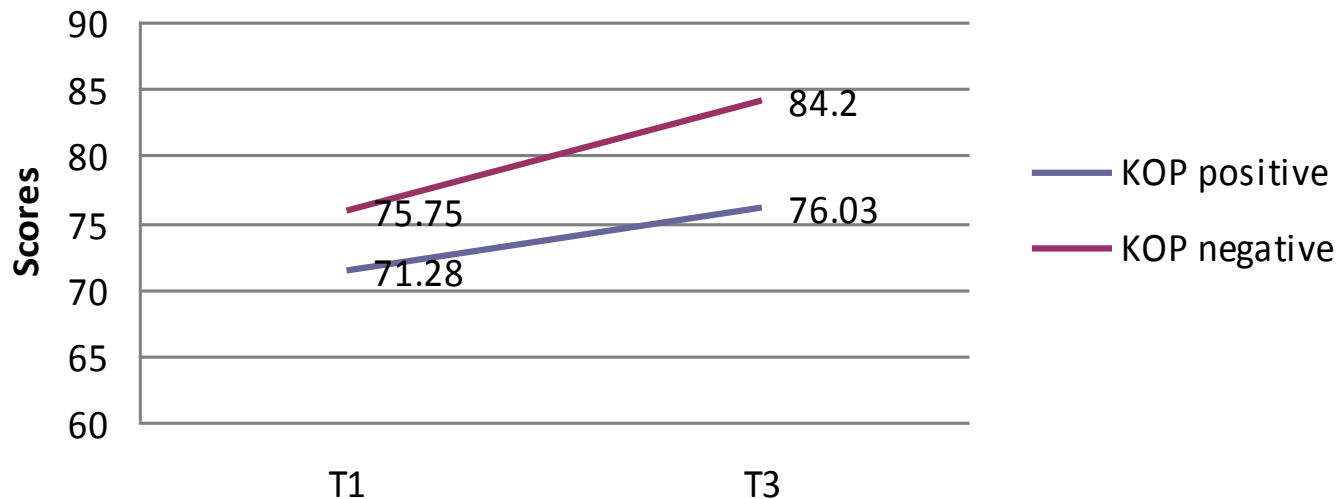
- HSIRB approval obtained
- Pre-test post-test single group design
 - Beginning of sophomore semester (T1)
 - End of sophomore semester (T2)
 - End of program (T3)
- Kogan's Old People scale (KOP)
- Demographic questionnaire

Sample

- T1 and T2
 - n=40
 - 75% female (n=30)
 - 80% under 25 years of age
 - Most had had prior experience with older adults
 - 87.5% Caucasian
- T3
 - n=35
 - 80% female (n=28)
 - 86% under 25 years of age (n=30)
 - Most had prior experience with older adults
 - 94.3% Caucasian

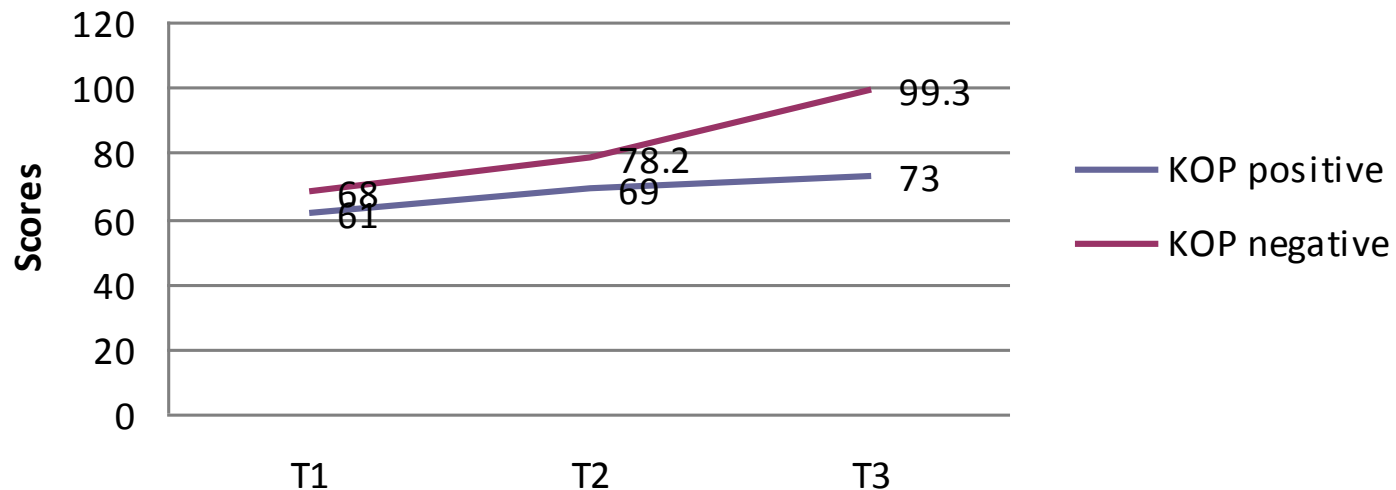
Results

KOP scores throughout study (whole cohort)



Results, cont.

KOP scores throughout the study (10 students)



Discussion

- Results consistent with previous research
- Higher scores on negative items consistent with Kogan's original research

Limitations

- Not all participants paired (only T1 and T2)
- Change in class composition
- Sampling issues
- The scale: old, may be outdated

Implications/Recommendations

- More research needed on factors affecting attitudes toward older adults
- Increased emphasis on gerontology education
- Gerontology education should be integrated throughout curriculum
- Aging specialists as faculty



Conclusion

- Increase in older adult population
- Negative attitudes toward older adults in society
- Great need for geriatric-educated health practitioners
- Increase in positive attitudes through education
- Necessity of gerontology-oriented, integrated nursing curricula.

A final thought...

***“Who will care for
a segment of
society to which
almost everyone
will someday
belong?”***

(Ryan & McCauley, 2005, p. 6)



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