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TOWARDS A MORE DEMOCRATIC FORUM: SOURCE ANALYSIS OF NEWS REPORTING ON OLDER PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS IN *DELO* DURING THE SLOVENIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS FROM 2004 TO 2018

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While an increasing number of studies provide important insights into media construction of old age, the structure of news sources is seldom examined. The latter is especially important in democratic societies, during election years, when people elect representatives who tackle older people's social problems. Using content analysis, we examined the source structure of news articles reporting on older people's problems in the Slovenian newspaper *Delo* in five sequential parliamentary election years from 2004 to 2018. The findings showed that news coverage was predominantly constructed by elite sources rarely including representatives of older people. This characteristic strengthens the surveillance function of *Delo* but undermines its role as a democratic forum. However, during the last three observed election years, *Delo*'s news reporting showed signs of transitioning towards a more democratic forum, which holds potential for fostering older people's civic inclusion.

Keywords: population ageing, social problems, media representations, print media, news reporting



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INTRODUCTION

The population of the European Union is rapidly ageing. Ageing and related issues have been elevated to the fore of political and economic debates, in which older people are often considered a destructive force, ultimately leading to the collapse of the economy and the welfare state (Macnicol, 2015; Pickard, 2019; Phillipson, 2013). This may pose a serious issue, especially in the EU member states such as Croatia, Italy and Slovenia, which are located in the South of Europe, one of the global regions where population ageing has been most pronounced (Gerdina & Kurdija, 2024). In this study, we explore the source structure of media representations of social problems that directly affect older people in one such rapidly ageing country – Slovenia, during the parliamentary election years in the national quality newspaper *Delo*.

The media act as gatekeepers who select which issues and events are worth reporting (Parsons, 1995). As Shoemaker (2006, p. 108) has observed, the media's task is not to reflect reality but to direct public attention to problems and situations that need solutions. If the media alerts and sensitises the public to an issue, it creates a demand for policies addressing the problem. This demand in democratic societies determines the supply of policies (Parsons, 1995). Such a practice is pronounced in modern democracies, in which engaging in face-to-face deliberation is not feasible for all members; the media thus serves as the primary platform for shaping public opinion and facilitating decision making through public discussion and argumentation (Elster, 1998). Its role becomes even more important during election years, when the public needs to elect representatives who will address social challenges in the political arena (Mustapić & Balabanić, 2018; Vozab & Peruško, 2018). In this respect, quality newspapers may be especially important since unlike other media genres, the content of informative media is more likely to be perceived as factual and can have greater bearings on election outcomes (Lamza Posavec & Rihtar, 2003; Kovács et al., 2021). Moreover, quality newspapers set the agenda for other media types (Edström, 2018), as the information is distributed through electronic or other communication channels (Bright, 2016). In other words, informative print media remain very important for opinion formation and decision making through public discussion and argumentation (Elster, 1998), which is especially pertinent during the election years.

Media representations in light of population ageing

The growth in the number of older people has increased interest in exploring the nature of media representations of old age in recent years (Bai, 2014; Ylänne, 2015). For example, a va-

riety of studies analysed quality newspapers and examined general media representations of old age (e.g., Ng & Indran, 2022; Jeong et al., 2022), or focused on a particular issue related to older people, such as retirement (Rudman, 2006; Ishikawa, 2022; Yang et al., 2022), dementia (Siiner, 2019) or care work (Torres & Lindbloom, 2020; Lindbloom & Torres, 2021).

While these studies give important insight into the construction of old age, ageing and related issues in the media, they seldom address the structure of the sources that construct these narratives. The investigation of source structure on news reporting regarding old age and ageing has been largely restricted to a series of studies of Australian and Malaysian news coverage (Harkin et al., 2018; Imran & Bowd, 2023; Thomson et al., 2023), and while there have been a few published studies examining the 'voice' of older people in Europe (e.g. Lepianka, 2015; Siiner, 2019; Meneses-Fernandez & Santana-Hernandez, 2024), they do not investigate the structure of sources in depth. By analysing the supply side of information (e.g. news sources), it is possible to gain important insights into who presents complex phenomena related to old age and population ageing to the public and how they might be received and understood by the public (Damstra & Vliegthart, 2018). Moreover, news sources, especially those appearing in quality newspapers, can help in shaping policy debates and public discourse, impacting the allocation of resources and the development of social policies aimed at addressing the needs of the society (Rudman, 2006). If older people's problems are not placed on the political agenda, the systemic solutions for them are less likely implemented (Gerdina, 2023).

Our aim is to analyse news articles reporting on social problems that directly affect older people (hereafter older people's problems) in the Slovene quality newspaper *Delo*, and to examine the diversity of news sources. By older people's problems, we mean socially-originated issues that are framed as undesirable and manageable through social means (Jamroznik & Nocella, 1998). We also intend to explore how the structure of sources within news reporting on older people's problems in *Delo* changed in the period 2004–2018. We chose Slovenia's accession to the EU in 2004 as the starting point for analysis, as the EU encourages its member states to address demographic issues, which include ageing and older people. This can be seen in various documents laid out by the EU (cf. Chapman, 1993). Within the Slovenian national context, old age and ageing, as well as older people's problems, have become increasingly important topics on the political agenda since the beginning of the 21st century, when the country began preparations to enter the EU. For example, Mali and Hrovatič (2015) find that social

care for older people started receiving attention since 2000, when several social policy documents that plan care for older people were adopted. Since then, ageing and older people's integration into society have been constant features in Slovenia following the EU's political agenda (Zimmermann, 2015).

The role of news source selection in media content creation

Norris (2000) promotes the ideal of the media as a civic forum promoting public debate, providing a platform for diverse voices and fostering a sense of community. As a civic forum, the media should serve as a public space for political discourse. The media's role, as conceptualised in this context, necessitates the availability and balance of news in terms of both the volume of issue coverage and the way issues are presented. This balance can be achieved through external diversity among different media outlets with strong political leanings or internal diversity, in which outlets present multiple and contrasting perspectives on a certain issue. Norris (2000) argues that the media, in this role, can contribute to the strengthening of civil society and the democratic process. It determines which voices are deemed important within society, and the media's ability to disseminate these voices opens up opportunities for participation in democratic processes (Edwards, 2018). The latter is especially important for older people, as they are often denied opportunities to participate civically (Serrat et al., 2020). However, many scholars are sceptical of the idea of the media as a civic forum (e.g., Meyer, 2002; Koopmans, 2004). Shoemaker (2006, p. 108), for example, writes that news making is not a democratic process: "Although the term democratic implies that the relative importance of problems in the news is decided through an open process that involves many individual citizens, in fact news is more likely to be shaped by a relatively small number of people." This quote highlights that the media can act as gatekeepers of information and deny access to certain voices as much as it has the capacity to serve as a civic forum.

From this, we set our first two research questions: what sources are used to construct news on older people's problems in the daily quality newspaper *Delo* during the five sequential parliamentary election years, and what is the extent of representation accorded to the voices of older people and their representatives? We use source analysis to gain a deeper understanding of who shapes the public's perceptions of social problems in old age and to determine whether news reporting acts as a civic forum in this domain. As such, this study is situated within an emerging body of research that analyses news sources in print news media on old age and related issues (Siiner, 2019; Harkin et al., 2018; Imran & Bowd, 2023; Thomson et al., 2023).

While there are no universal standards of journalistic writing (despite numerous ethical codes of journalism), professional journalistic rules strive towards the ideal of objectivity which stresses that journalists' claims must be valid, meaning in practice that they must either be supported by facts or by reference to competent sources (Laban & Poler Kovačič, 2007). Furthermore, the latter are supposed to be balanced, which means that in mass media opposing groups should be given the same amount of space, and all interests in the community should have an equal chance of media coverage (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In practice, however, the choice of news sources is selective and depends on a range of factors (Kim et al., 2010; Tomanić Trivundža, 2016). Especially when deadlines are tight, journalists often rely on routine sources (Scheufele, 1999; Thomson et al., 2023).

According to Thomson et al. (2023), sources can be animate (people) or inanimate (e.g., policy submissions, reports and meeting minutes). They can exist in raw data or in already structured press releases. Some are based on materials from primary sources (e.g. interviewees), while others rely on already published content and reuse secondary source material. Dekavalla and Jelen-Sanchez (2016) provide a typology of sources which they divided between elite (these are official, expert) and non-elite (these are official, unofficial) sources. Elite official sources have the role of news makers and are at the top of the credibility hierarchy (e.g., political and state institutions, corporations and business organisations, major NGOs etc.), whereas non-elite official sources have the same role but have a lower status of legitimacy and credibility (e.g., small non-profit organisations, organised activities, pressure groups etc.), and they often challenge the status quo. Experts enjoy elite status because of their expertise, but they do not represent the views of institutions as elite official sources do and, accordingly, most often act as news shapers (e.g., scientists and academics, specialists, former public officials etc.). Similarly, non-elite unofficial sources act as news shapers, enjoying legitimacy because of their personal experiences of lived reality (e.g., vox populi, survey respondents, protestors etc.).

Indexing theory (Bennet, 1990; 2015) states that journalists rely on professional reporting norms that implicitly filter or routinely index sources and actors' views based on perceptions of power relations. Source selection and media content creation are especially important during parliamentary election years, when the public is called to elect representatives who will tackle rising political, economic and social problems. Politicians need access to the media to communicate and jus-

tify their political agenda to potential voters; in return, the media accesses politicians as constant and credible sources of stories (Bašić Hrvatin & Kučić, 2004). As such, questions regarding representation, absence and the dominance or neglect of certain voices in mass media remain critical concerns in both democratic theory and public debate (Cottle, 2003).

In our third research question, we determine whether the structure of news sources reporting on older people's problems in *Delo* differs across the five sequential parliamentary election years and, if so, in what ways.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

We conducted a study of the Slovene national daily newspaper *Delo*, focusing on five sequential parliamentary election years within a 15-year period; these are 2004, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2018. We chose *Delo* because of its position in the Slovene media space as the central quality newspaper (European Press Roundup, 2023).

Delo's daily editions were chosen for the analysis as they contain a substantial number of articles directly affecting the social imaginary of old age, along with a large amount of news, "understood as the most important media genre for agenda-setting" (Edström, 2018, p. 84).

Data collection and analysis

The articles for analysis were retrieved in two phases. First, an internal electronic search of the *Delo* newspaper archive was conducted. Two separate searches were performed in the electronic database, in which the presence of the root *old** (original *star**) and *retire** (original *pokoj**) was examined anywhere in the texts that were part of *Delo's* daily editions from Monday to Saturday, without supplements, in the selected years. Journalistic articles from the following categories were excluded: humour and anecdotes, black chronicles, artwork reviews, letters from readers, paid promotions, obituaries and non-textual material. The retrieved data were carefully read to exclude texts in which the key words did not relate to old age or older people (e.g. 'old continent'), and texts that did not have a substantial emphasis on old age or ageing. The cut-off was set at 50% of the article content on old age and age-related topics, which led to the inclusion of 1,243 articles.

In the second step, we read the collected material ($N = 1243$) and determined whether the issue in each article was framed as a social problem. This was founded upon the premise that such framed issues can have considerable influence on the political agenda (Parsons, 1995). The criteria to determine a social problem were adopted from Jamroznik and Nocella (1998). The issue at hand had to

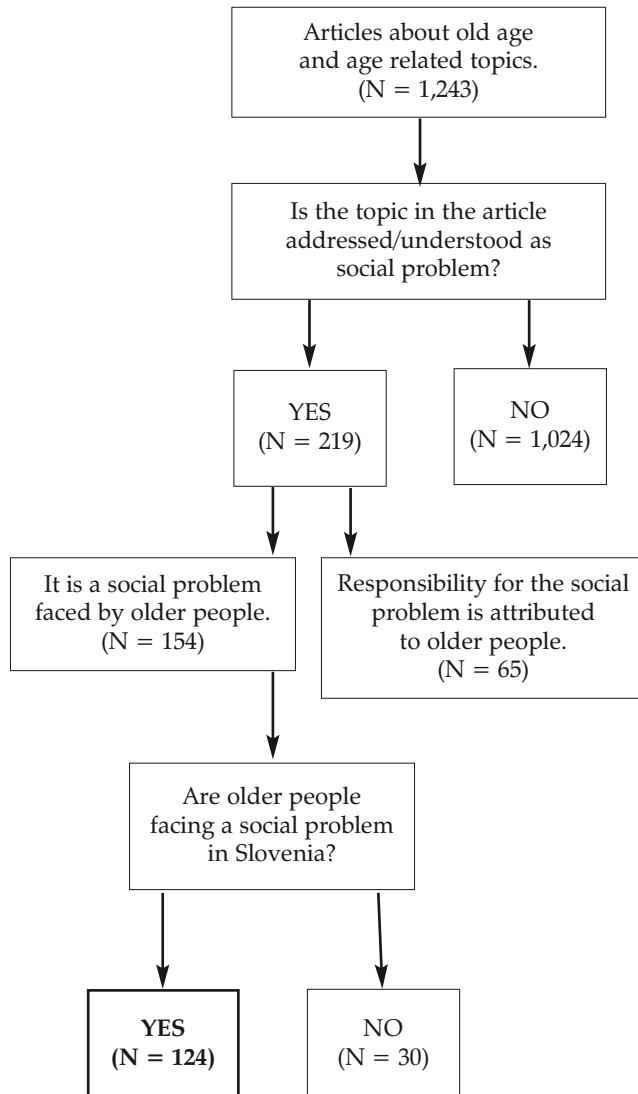
a. report on something deemed by the author of the text as undesirable, negative or threatening to important social values and interests, or is perceived as threatening to society;

b. concern something of social origin (e.g., a social circumstance, process, arrangement or attitude); and

c. be considered socially manageable and amenable to social control by the author of the text.

We further excluded contributions that addressed social problems for which older people, or an ageing population were blamed, as the present study is concerned with older people's problems. The final sample consisted of 124 news articles (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Flowchart of
newspaper article
selection



Once the data were collected, we used content news source analysis to analyse all the newspaper texts that met the inclusion criteria. We extracted data on the newspaper article's basic information (these are title, publishing genre, section, date, region, and length of the text in number of words) and news sources (these are name and affiliation, number of sources, gender and number of words dedicated to the source). News source had to be explicitly stated and identified as the primary source of information in order to be extracted. Both authors were responsible for this step, and any dilemmas were discussed with a third expert person until agreement was reached.

Coding for news source and voice of older people was done by the second author using the taxonomy model of news sources by Dekavalla and Jelen-Sanchez (2016), which the authors turned into a codebook (see appendix A). Any coding uncertainties were discussed on an ongoing basis between the first and second authors until a final agreement was reached. The reliability of the coding was ascertained by calculating the inter-coder agreement at the conclusion of the coding process on a random sample of 39 sources, representing 10% of the total number of sources identified. The degree of agreement was determined using Scott's π , which demonstrated that the measurements in the study were reliable (Scott's $\pi \geq 0.9$ for both news source type and older people's voice). Finally, we conducted a descriptive statistical analysis to compare the frequencies of the identified types of news sources across the five different years (considered as groups) and performed chi-square test of independence to check for statistical significance.

RESULTS

TABLE 1
Distribution of the number of newspaper articles on older people's problems, news sources and older people's voice across the selected years

We identified 378 news sources in 124 newspaper articles reporting on older people's problems, among which 22.8% represented older people's voice (for distribution across the parliamentary election years see Table 1). The analysed newspaper articles were 266,220 words long, of which 48,807 words accounted for the news sources, with an average of 129 words per news source type (see Table 2). In five articles, no news sources were identified.

Years	No. of articles on older people's problems	No. of news sources	No. of older people's voice	% of older people's voice
2004	14	46	8	17.4
2008	27	62	11	17.7
2011	22	59	15	25.4
2014	18	53	7	13.2
2018	43	158	45	28.5
<i>All years</i>	124	378	86	22.8

TABLE 2
News source type
frequency and older
people's voice distri-
bution across new
source type

Most news sources identified were elite, accounting for 73.5% of all 378 sources. Of these elite sources, 79.5% were official sources, and 20.5% were experts. Among elite sources, 13.3% were representatives of older people. Non-elite sources accounted for 25.1% of all sources, among which 51.6% represented older people's voice. Of non-elite sources, 49.5% were official sources, and 50.5% were unofficial sources (see Table 2).

Source type		No. of news sources	% of news source type	No. of older people's voice	% of older people's voice within news source type
Elite	Official	221	79.5	28	12.7
	Expert	57	20.5	9	15.8
	Total	278	73.5	37	13.3
Non-elite	Official	47	49.5	14	29.8
	Unofficial	48	50.5	35	72.9
	Total	95	25.1	49	51.6
Unaccounted		5	1.3	0	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>378</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>22.8</i>

A more detailed analysis of news sources (see Appendix B) shows that within elite official sources, state institutions are most represented (53.8%). They include ministries, nursing homes, social services, state inspectorates, committees, institutes, councils, statistical offices, the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia, the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia, the Ombudsman and the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, among other organisations. Less represented are political institutions (e.g., political parties or their representatives) at 14.9%, major non-government institutions (NGOs) or major unions at 12.7% (including the Slovenian Federation of Pensioners' Organisations and the Union of Pensioners of Slovenia, which are influential actors advocating for the rights of older people in Slovenia), also including the highest number of older people's voice among elite sources and municipal institutions (e.g., municipalities, mayors or representatives of mayor's offices) at 10.0%.

Specialists or professionals (e.g., doctors and health or social care workers) and academics or scientists (e.g., professors or researchers) were presented almost equally among experts, together making up 68.4% of expert sources.

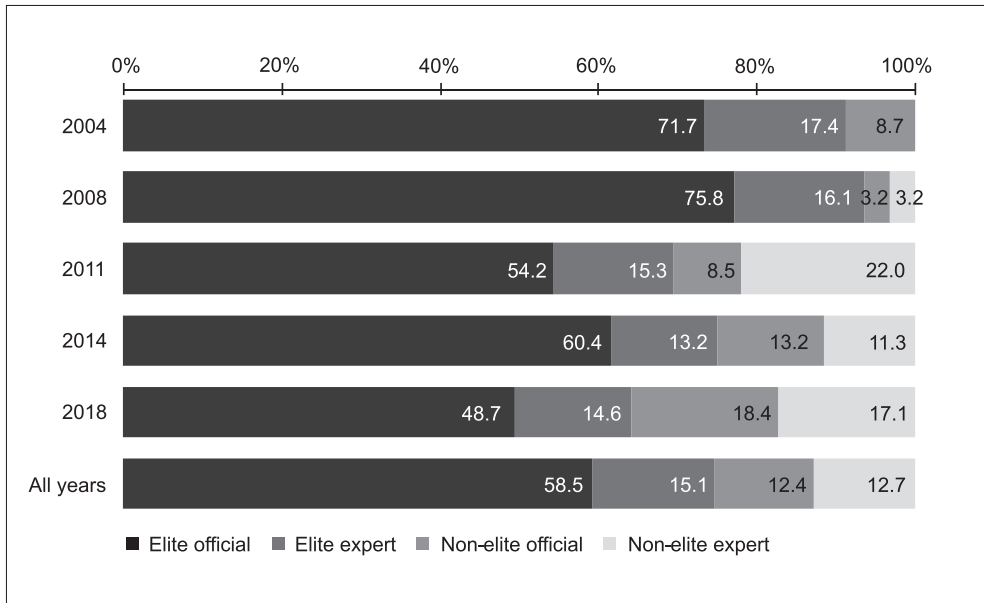
Within non-elite official sources, the most present are small NGOs or unions at 76.6%, among which 36.1% are representing older people. Within non-elite unofficial sources, the most present are vox populi (viz. voice of everyday people) at 52.5%, among which 84% constitute the voice of older people.

In all categories, there are generalised news sources, meaning the source is not specified (for example, 'in people's opinions' and 'experts say') the least of them being within elite official sources (1.8%) and the most among non-elite unofficial sources (16.7%). Five sources were unaccounted, meaning that the news source could not be defined (for example, 'the data show,' 'our sources say,' and 'unofficial rough estimates'), which were excluded from further analysis.

News source type structure over the years

The analysis of the presence of news source types in each year (see Figure 2) showed that they differed in structure. We conducted further analysis (chi-square test) to verify the observed differences in news source type structure addressing older people's problems in the five selected years, which were found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2(12, N = 373) = 34.445, p < 0.001, V = 0.175$).

FIGURE 2
 Comparison of the representation of news source types across years



In 2004 and 2008, around 90% of all news sources were elite. In 2004, there was no voice of non-elite unofficial sources, and there was some presence of non-elite official sources; in 2008, the presence of the latter was lower, while the first non-elite unofficial sources appeared. In 2011, we observe substantially fewer elite sources, which accounted for around 70% of the total, together with more non-elite unofficial sources. Further enquiry revealed that the observed increase was caused by a study on an age-friendly city conducted in the Municipality of Ljubljana. In 2014, elite sources were still at

around 70%, and then in 2018 their number was the lowest compared to all selected years and accounted for 63% of all news sources. Meanwhile, during 2014 and 2018, both types of non-elite sources had more presence compared to previous selected years and became equally represented within their categories. Throughout all the years studied, we can observe that the share of experts within the elite category is somewhat the same (around 15%, varying from 13.2% to 17.4%), while the share of elite official sources has decreased from the first two measuring points (2004, 2008) to the last two (2014, 2018).

DISCUSSION

In the EU, due to population ageing, there is an expected increase in social security and health-care provision expenses (Harper, 2023a), fuelling debates regarding the distribution of resources among different age groups (Harper, 2023b). This makes population ageing an important contemporary issue that needs to be politically addressed by EU member states. The news media play a key role in how these issues will be thought about and dealt with in democratic societies. As Prodnik and Vobič (2024) explain: "Even in an age of online social networks and the Internet, institutional news media remain a vital amplifier of political opinions, with the choices made by journalists largely setting the contours of the public debate (p. 15)."

The dominance of elite voices

The selection of news sources becomes of fundamental concern in democratic societies, especially during election years when people elect representatives who will tackle social problems affecting older people. It not only defines the diversity but also the visibility of voices (Prodnik & Vobič, 2024) addressing older people's problems in the public sphere.

Regarding our first research question, we found that elite sources were the most numerous. The dominance of elite voices mirrors the findings of other studies on newspaper media reporting on old age and ageing (see e.g., Imran & Bowd, 2023; Thomson et al., 2023; Meneses-Fernandez & Santana-Hernandez, 2024) and different topics (see e.g., Damstra & Vliegthart, 2018; Lindblom & Torres, 2021). For example, Thompson et al. (2023) found a similar distribution of 80/20 elite versus non-elite sources in four national Australian news outlets covering aged-care related news coverage during a 15-month period between October 2018 and June 2021. Our study further adds to the established consensus based on a diverse body of empirical research that the selection of sources has been highly unequal within society (Prodnik & Vobič, 2024). This

finding primarily indicates that the cultural assumptions about the credibility of elite sources are deeply embedded in society (Cottle, 2003; McNair, 1998), and that the inherent bias towards elite sources (Prodnik & Vobič, 2024) is ingrained in the main Slovene quality newspaper *Delo*.

Furthermore, the finding that the most numerous sources (not only within elite sources but all sources) were official elites, wherein 12.7% were representatives of older people, reveals that *Delo's* journalists most likely conform to normative journalistic professional practices (see indexing theory; Bennett, 2015), or that they may face known organisational barriers that prevent them from accessing certain sources (Scheufele, 1999). This further indicates that *Delo's* news reporting on older people's problems is biased and that representatives that are best suited to voice the concerns of older people are rarely consulted. Instead, the contours of the debate on older people's problems are shaped by other elite actors.

While experts were in the minority within the elite sources, their share in *Delo* remained quite unchanged throughout the years, which was around 15%. This could reflect the ongoing ambivalent relationship between journalists and experts, as explained by Peters (1995; 2013), in which journalists and experts differ in their respective roles in content creation and their preferred reporting styles. The consistent presence of experts' voices partially counteracts the dominance of elite official sources because experts tend to appear as neutral sources (Boyce, 2006; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Nevertheless, they are still in the minority compared with their elite counterparts, indicating that the debate on older people's problems remains largely biased towards the interest of the state or the political elites.

Regarding our second research question, our analysis showed that older people rarely get to voice their own problems in *Delo*, which is consistent with the existing body of literature on the underrepresentation of older people in printed newspapers (see e.g., Lepianka, 2015; Imran & Bowd, 2023; Meneses-Fernandez & Santana-Hernandez, 2024). The latter is also consistent with Edström's (2018) observation that working-age individuals (in the 15 to 44 age range) are most likely to be represented in the media. After the age of 45, one's affiliated age group becomes less visible (ibid). The results of our study indicate that older individuals are relatively voiceless in news articles focused on addressing their specific problems. This observation not only illustrates the existence of a societal power imbalance but also suggests that *Delo* is not providing a genuinely democratic platform where diverse perspectives

of older individuals can be represented. This is consistent with the observation that socially valued groups of people appear in the media frequently, while less valued groups are either negatively represented or ignored (Makita et al., 2021).

The finding that older people do not get to speak on their behalf in media texts has been interpreted as ageism in the media (Ylänne, 2015; Thomson et al., 2023). Since survey data shows that ageism is widespread among the Slovene general population (Gerdina & Kurdija, 2024), the media's inclusion of ordinary citizens' voices in discussions of matters of public concern would be a crucial step in combating ageism and for promoting a more active citizenry (Gamson, 2001; Lewis et al., 2005). Excluding older people from voicing their own problems limits the power of this group to shape political agenda on the issues they face. During election years, this particularly deprives them of the possibility of influencing issues on which political campaigns are centred, as it is the salience of social problems in the media that determines points of interest for the general public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972); this, in turn, increases the chance of the social problems becoming political issues (Mandič, 2002). As Thomson et al. (2023) posit, journalists bear the responsibility of ensuring that non-elite and vulnerable sources are afforded the opportunity to share their perspectives.

Changes in the voices who speak about older people's problems

While the above findings paint a negative picture, the results of our third research question show that the structure of voices in articles on older people's problems in *Delo* is slowly becoming more diverse. In the first two parliamentary election years (2004 and 2008), elites were almost the only actors consulted regarding older people's problems; in 2011, this started to change. We observed a substantial increase in non-elite unofficial sources where the voice of older people was most concentrated. However, once established in the newspaper, such sources representing the voice of older people sustained a continued presence throughout the rest of the observed years. Non-elite official and unofficial sources balanced out in 2014 and further proportionately increased in 2018, when Generation+, a news section devoted to older people, ageing and related issues, was introduced. Given that newspapers, like other traditional media, have the potential to serve as crucial platforms in promoting political inclusion within society (Muscat, 2019), our findings regarding the change in source structure highlight the possible benefits of introducing a special section on old age and ageing.

Although our study of sources in news articles addressing older people's problems in *Delo* showed the dominance of elite sources in all the years examined, it also observed a slow decrease in elite sources, namely, official sources, throughout the five parliamentary years, with a parallel increase in non-elite sources starting in 2011. The trend of pluralisation of news sources identified in our study resonates with the study of voices in media reporting on dementia (Siiner, 2019). Despite the fact that non-elite sources still accounted for less than half of all sources used in newspaper reporting on older people's problems in 2018, the increase in the plurality of sources in the last three parliamentary election years may indicate that newspaper reporting on older people's problems in the main Slovene quality newspaper *Delo* is becoming more open and democratic in terms of enabling a space for diverse – even opposing – perspectives; it is also enabling different social groups to participate in a public democratic debate (Cottle, 2003; Norris, 2000). We believe that this represents a positive development, as it potentially supports more diverse social problems to be put on the newspaper's agenda and allows for a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the challenges faced by older people. As newspapers are one of the key infrastructures for enabling political recognition (Muscat, 2019), this furthers the potential to foster older people's civic inclusion, which is important for people to remain socially connected and engaged in later life (Serrat et al. 2020).

Limitations and future research

As the experience of old age depends on the society and historical period in which it is situated (Gibb & Holroyd, 1996), this research serves not only as a snapshot of the situation but also as an archaeological report for future research on news sources that appear in news coverage of older people's problems in a specific culture and at a specific historical time. More concretely, other researchers could build on the results of this study by including thematic supplements, in which interpretive media genres are usually more common. If we had included supplements in our study, we could have detected a different distribution of news sources, such as one with a higher representation of experts and non-elite official sources. Furthermore, since the analysis is based on a single, albeit significant newspaper, its editorial policy may not reflect news reporting in other media outlets. The findings can serve as a foundational reference for future studies comparing different daily newspapers. By highlighting the specific source structure within *Delo's* reporting on older people's problems, the pres-

ent study encourages future research to consider whether comparable trends can be discerned in other news media, or whether a similar source structure can be identified in the reporting on the problems faced by younger or middle-aged people.

In addition, the present study focused on published texts, which were the end products of complex news selection processes influenced at least by social norms and cultural values, organisational pressures and constraints, interest and political group pressures, and professional routines (Tewksburry & Scheufele, 2009). Future research would be needed to explore these influences in more detail and to determine the extent to which the media mimics the messages served to them by various news sources. Concretely, future studies could deepen our understanding of news source usage in newspapers by employing ethnographic interviews with news producers or participant observation (see e.g. Munnik, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The news media serves as a key platform for public discussion in democratic societies for opinion formation and decision making (Elster, 1998; Norris, 2000). This function becomes particularly important during parliamentary elections, which decide who will address the social change that population ageing brings.

Our analysis of the main Slovene daily newspaper *Delo's* news coverage of older people's problems, including five sequential parliamentary election years (2004, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2018), showed that news coverage of older people's problems was predominantly constructed by elite sources, which strengthens the surveillance function of the newspaper that helps make politicians more accountable but undermines the newspaper's role as a democratic forum (Norris, 2000; 2014). However, there has been an increase in the plurality of voices, especially in the last observed year (i.e. 2018). This suggests a move towards a more democratic news reporting, which holds potential for fostering older people's civic inclusion.

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APPENDIX

A Code book

News source type (code)	Detailed categorisation of news source (code)
Elite	Official (1) <i>State institution</i> (including ministries and its representatives, nursing homes, social services, state inspectorates, committees, institutes, councils, statistical offices, the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia, the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia, the Ombudsman and the Advocate of the Principle of Equality and similar) (1) <i>Political institution</i> (including government, president, prime minister, political parties or their representative) (2) <i>Municipal institution</i> (municipalities, mayors or representatives of mayor's offices) (3) <i>Major NGO or union</i> (including the Slovenian Federation of Pensioners' organisations, the Union of Pensioners of Slovenia, other major NGOs like Red Cross) (4) <i>Business</i> (including corporate, business and economic organisations) (5) <i>Insurance company</i> (6) <i>Bank</i> (7) <i>Media, press</i> (press agencies, TV shows etc.) (8) <i>General</i> (including general mentions of elite official sources, e.g. businessman) (991)
	Expert (2) <i>Specialist, professional</i> (including medical doctors and health or social care workers) (10) <i>Academic, social scientist</i> (including professors or researchers) (11) <i>Research or research institution</i> (including research results, indexes and research institutions, not including research participants) (12) <i>Ex-officio, ex-professional</i> (including former government representatives, politicians and other actors, who have specialist knowledge about social and political issues at hand) (13) <i>General</i> (including general mentions of expert sources like, e.g. experts, scientists) (992)
Non-elite	Official (3) <i>Small NGO, association, union</i> (including local NGOs, organisations and unions such as local pensioner unions or associations) (20) <i>Project, programme, organised activity, movement, pressure group</i> (including more 'opportunistic' projects, activities, groups that bring people together temporarily) (21) <i>General</i> (including general mentions of non-elite official sources, e.g. humanitarian organisations) (993)
	Unofficial (4) <i>Vox populi</i> (including voice of everyday people, older people, citizens) (30) <i>Volunteer, community member, participant</i> (including people involved with projects, activities, communities) (31) <i>Study, survey participant</i> (including explicit mentions of study or survey participants unlike with research where emphasis is on survey results, not participants) (32) <i>Protestor, violator of the law</i> (33) <i>General</i> (including general mentions of non-elite unofficial sources, e.g. retirees, citizens) (994)
	Unaccounted (5) (999)
	No source (0) <i>Represents older people</i> (voices of older people or their representatives) Yes (1), No (2)

B News source type frequencies and older people's voice

	News source type frequencies			Older people's voice		
	No.	Within	Overall %	No.	Within	Overall %
		category %			source type %	
All years						
<i>Elite official</i>	221	100.0	58.5	28	1.7	7.4
State institution	119	53.8	31.5	3	2.5	0.8
Political institution	33	14.9	8.7	2	6.1	0.5
Municipal institution	22	10.0	5.8	0	0.0	0.0
Major NGO, union	28	12.7	7.4	23	82.1	6.1
Business, insurance company, bank	12	5.4	3.2	0	0.0	0.0
Media, press	3	1.4	0.8	0	0.0	0.0
General	4	1.8	1.1	0	0.0	0.0
<i>Expert</i>	57	100.0	15.1	9	15.8	2.4
Specialist, professional	20	35.1	5.3	2	10.0	0.5
Academic, social scientist	19	33.3	5.0	0	0.0	0.0
Research or research institution	6	10.5	1.6	5	83.3	1.3
Ex-officio, ex-professional	4	7.0	1.1	2	50.0	0.5
General	8	14.0	2.1	0	0.0	0.0
<i>Non-elite official</i>	47	100.0	12.4	14	29.8	3.7
Small NGO, association, union	36	76.6	9.5	13	36.1	3.4
Project, programme, organised activity, movement, pressure group	9	18.8	2.4	1	11.1	0.3
General	2	4.2	0.5	0	0.0	0.0
<i>Non-elite unofficial</i>	48	100.0	12.7	35	72.9	9.3
Vox populi	25	52.1	6.6	21	84.0	5.6
Volunteer, community member, participant	6	12.5	1.6	3	50.0	0.8
Study, survey participant	6	12.5	1.6	5	83.3	1.3
Protector, violator of the law	3	6.3	0.8	1	33.3	0.3
General	8	16.7	2.1	5	62.5	1.3
<i>Unaccounted</i>	5	100.0	1.3	0	0.0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	378	100.0		86	22.8	

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Prema demokratičnijem forumu: analiza izvora novinskog izvještavanja o problemima starijih osoba u *Delu* tijekom slovenskih parlamentarnih izbora od 2004. do 2018. godine

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Iako sve veći broj studija pruža važne uvide u medijsku konstrukciju starosti, struktura izvora vijesti rijetko se ispituje. Potonje je posebno važno u demokratskim društvima, tijekom izbornih godina, kada ljudi biraju predstavnike koji se bave socijalnim problemima starijih osoba. Koristeći se analizama sadržaja, ispitali smo strukturu medijskih izvora novinskih članaka koji su izvještavali o problemima starijih osoba u nacionalnim kvalitetnim slovenskim novinama *Delo* u pet uzastopnih parlamentarnih izbornih godina od 2004. do 2018. godine. Nalazi su pokazali da su vijesti uglavnom sastavljali elitni izvori koji rijetko uključuju predstavnike starijih osoba. Ova karakteristika jača nadzornu funkciju medija, ali potkopava ulogu medija kao demokratskoga foruma. Međutim, u zadnje tri promatrane izborne godine novinsko izvještavanje u *Delu* pokazalo je znakove prijelaza prema služenju kao demokratski forum, koji ima potencijal za poticanje građanske uključenosti starijih osoba.

Ključne riječi: starenje populacije, društveni problemi, medijski prikazi, tiskani mediji, novinsko izvještavanje



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