The European Journal of Ageing and the debate on consequences of population ageing

D. J. H. Deeg · H. Litwin · H.-W. Wahl

© Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2014

As populations of nations all over the world are ageing, the awareness of the consequences of this fact is growing. But what are these consequences? Do older people just cost money—for state pensions or health care—or do they have essential things to contribute to society? In the societal debate, we can hear one or the other view but very often without proper support from evidence. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance that new policy measures be based on correct assumptions and that health care systems are changed based on correct premises. Moreover, the experience of older individuals themselves often gets lost in the societal debate. Journals such as the European Journal of Ageing (EJA) have the mission to disseminate conceptual frameworks and empirical research findings that provide the evidence that is needed for proper thinking about ageing and for aiding future projections and policy measures.

D. J. H. Deeg (✉)
Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics/LASA, VU
University Medical Centre, Van der Boechorststraat 7,
1081 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands
e-mail: ēja@vumc.nl

H. Litwin
Paul Baerwald School of Social Work & Social Welfare, Israel
Gerontological Data Center, The Hebrew University in
Jerusalem, Mount Scopus, 91905 Jerusalem, Israel
e-mail: ēja@mail.huji.ac.il

H.-W. Wahl
Department of Psychological Aging Research, Heidelberg
University, Institute of Psychology, Bergheimer Strasse 20,
69115 Heidelberg, Germany
e-mail: ēja@psychologie.uni-heidelberg.de

Dissemination of research published in EJA

How does the EJA perform in terms of its mission? In the ISI Journal Citation Reports of the Web of Science, quantitative indicators of performance are available. EJA is listed in the Social Science Citation Index, in the category Gerontology. This category includes 30 journals. EJA's 2012 Impact Factor (IF) is 0.833. The IF for 2012 is the ratio of the number of times articles published in EJA in 2010–2011 are cited by ISI journals in 2012, divided by the number of articles published in EJA in 2010–2011. Specifically, this is the 2-year IF, which is most often used. However, the Journal Citation Reports list a host of other indices. Listed in Table 1 are several relevant indices, where possible compared with the median or aggregated indices across all Gerontology journals. It can be observed that EJA's 5-year IF (1.425) is substantially higher than its 2-year IF. Because the EJA publishes a relatively low number of articles per year, i.e. 34 articles against a total of 2,349 in all 30 Gerontology journals, the 2-year IF is likely to be unstable. The 5-year IF is more stable and thus likely to provide a better estimate of EJA's impact.

Relatively good scores are observed on the Immediacy Index, where EJA ranks 8 among 30 journals. The Immediacy Index is the number of times articles published in EJA in a single year that are cited by ISI journals in the same year, divided by the number of articles published in EJA in this year. Poorer ranks are observed for the Cited half-life and the Total cites. The former may be attributed to the relatively short 'life' of the EJA and may rise with an increasing number of volumes. The latter can be attributed to the relatively low number of articles published annually.

The 'citation life' of articles, i.e. where and how often they are cited after they have been published in EJA can

Table 1 Journal Citation Report for European Journal of Ageing, 2012

	Value	Rank	All gerontology
2-year IF	0.833	18	1.039 (median)
5-year IF	1.425	15	–
Immediacy index	0.500	8	0.443 (aggregated)
Cited half-life	5.1	28	8.0 (aggregated)
Total cites	347	24	–

also be explored. In the ISI Journal Citation Reports, we can find the journals that cite articles from EJA by year of publication in this journal. Note, that this only concerns journals that have been accepted by Thomson Reuter's ISI, in other words, well-established journals with an impact factor. Articles published in EJA in the period 2004–2010 were cited a total of 258 times. Among these cites, 40 were in EJA itself. The citing journal next in frequency is Ageing & Society (29 cites). Other journals cited EJA articles less than ten times. Four or more cites were found in Journal of Gerontology: Psychological and Social Sciences, BMC Health Services Research, Journal of Aging and Health, Aging and Mental Health, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, Demographic Research, Health and Quality of Life and BMC Public Health. This collection of journals nicely reflects the multidisciplinary perspective of EJA: social, behavioural and health-related. Furthermore, these are not all gerontological journals, demonstrating that ageing research pervades all disciplines.

Other quantitative indicators of EJA's performance are gathered by the Publisher, Springer. For the period 2009–2012, these show an increase in the number of hits (entries to the EJA website), subscriptions of the Table of contents alerts and also the number of citations.

Based upon all these indicators, the conclusion may be drawn that the EJA is a solid mid-range journal with increasing dissemination in the scientific world. To judge the Journal's dissemination outside science is more difficult. One might consider geographic representation, arguing that research published by authors from a specific country is most likely to be picked up by potential users of the findings in this country. An inventory of the countries from which first authors come revealed that on the whole, submissions came from some 50 countries. The majority of authors came from Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands, but authors from other countries are increasing their submissions. Also, a substantial number of cross-national studies are submitted. Comparative research helps to further the thinking about alternative policies and practices. In all, the EJA potentially helps to inform debates and the design of best practices.

Current issue

In this issue, nine articles are published that cover the full scope of our Journal: the social, behaviour and health domains. Highlighting some of these articles in more depth, two make use of cross-national datasets: 28 countries covered in the European Social Survey (Ayalon et al. 2014), and 16 countries covered in the combined U.S. Health and Retirement Survey, English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, and Survey of Health Ageing and Retirement in Europe (De Vries et al. 2014). Both studies address the question as to whether the national context in which people age contributes to how they age, over and above individual factors. Ayalon et al. conclude that context explains a substantial 14 % of the variance in the age-perception of the ending of youth, but it explained only 6 % in the age-perception of the beginning of old age. Individual differences proved to be more important than context in relation to age-perception. This result would speak, for example, to the debate on the sense or nonsense of maintaining a fixed retirement age. In contrast, De Vries et al. show that the extent of historic income inequality in a country was negatively associated with objective measures of functioning such as grip strength and lung function but not with self-perceived limitations in functioning. Interestingly, between-country differences in height explained part of the variation in the objective measures. This finding suggests that nutrition in early life (leading to a specific height in adulthood) is a key factor in inequality in objective functioning in older age. As nutrition has improved in most countries, this seems to be good news for the level of functioning of future generations of older people.

Two other articles address issues that are widely debated currently: the situation of older immigrants from non-Western into Western countries, and the extension of paid working life. The first issue is addressed in a Danish study that made use of administrative registry data on home care and residential care (Hansen 2014). The study provides badly needed evidence on the under-use of health services by older immigrants. A positive finding was that the extent of under-use decreased the longer the immigrant had lived in Denmark. The second issue regarding extension of paid working life is addressed in a study based on 14 waves of the British Household Panel Survey, which in particular focuses on gender differences in work and family histories (Finch 2014). The article shows that women tend to extend their working lives either for financial reasons or for 'status maintenance' but are hampered by lengthy periods without labour market attachment due to caring responsibilities. Certainly, there seems room for improvement in women's continued labour market participation.

These and other articles published in the EJA provide essential evidence on the consequences of population ageing. It is the hope of the editors that the findings reported will feed into current debates and will contribute to making

the views of key actors in society, as well as the policy measures that they promote, more evidence-based.

References

- Ayalon L, Doron I, Bodner E, Inbar N (2013) Macro- and micro-level predictors of age categorisation: results from the European Social Survey. *Eur J Ageing* 11(1):5–18
- De Vries R, Blane D, Netuveli G (2013) Long-term exposure to income inequality: implications for physical functioning at older ages. *Eur J Ageing* 11(1):19–29
- Finch N (2014) Why are women more likely than men to extend paid work? The impact of work-family life history. *Eur J Ageing* 11(1):31–39
- Hansen EB (2013) Older immigrants' use of public home care and residential care. *Eur J Ageing* 11(1):41–53