

Research article

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Attitudes Toward Appearance and the Construction of Perceived Age Among Men and Women: Why Do Women Look Younger?

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Abstract

Introduction. This study was conducted to identify the influence of gender- and age-related socio-psychological factors on the construction of perceived age in the process of social cognition. The study aims to investigate the characteristics of attitudes toward own appearance and perceived age in 35–75-year-old men and women. **Methods.** We used the Photo-video Presentation of Appearance procedure developed by T. A. Vorontsova and five diagnostic tools developed by V. A. Labunskaya to diagnose attitudes toward appearance. *The main sample* comprised 523 subjects (207 males and 316 females) aged 35 to 75 years. The reliability of the research results was achieved by descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation analysis, Student's t-test, Levene's test for equal variances, and Mann-Whitney U test. **Results.** The results of the study showed that (1) mature women (aged 35 to 59) look significantly younger than men of the same age; in old age (60–75 years), the discrepancy between perceived age and chronological age ("years saved") is similar for men and women (both look on average 3.5 to 4 years younger); (2) significant gender-related differences were found in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of attitudes toward appearance among men and women; in old age, differences were observed in only two parameters of attitudes – the desire to improve appearance and ideas about male friends' assessments of appearance (significantly higher in women); (3) correlations were found between the parameters of men's and women's attitudes toward their own appearance and their perceived age, mediated by the life stage. **Discussion.** The findings were discussed in the context of the social psychology of appearance, the "multifactorial model of attitudes toward appearance", gender stereotypes, expectations, and the "double standard of aging" between men and women.

Keywords

age, appearance, perception of age, perceived age, social perception, attitude, years saved, women, men, aging

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Introduction

In modern social psychology, an individual's perceived age (PA) is defined as a phenomenon of social cognition, as an age "assigned to an individual (object of perception) by another individual (subject of perception, assessor) in result of the perception of his/her own appearance" (Shkurko & Labunskaya, 2018 p. 450). Age perception (one's own and others') is considered a special case of social perception.

In Russian social psychology, Alexey Aleksandrovich Bodalev (Bodalev, 1982, 2015) described the socio-psychological patterns of human perception of another person, which refers to the perception of another person's age. In the studies of A. A. Bodalev, his colleagues and followers identified the main factors that characterize human perception of another person. These are psychological and socio-psychological characteristics of the object of perception, the subject of perception, the relationship between the object and the subject of perception, and the social situation of interaction. In his famous work, *Perception and Understanding of Man by Man* (Bodalev, 1982), A. A. Bodalev have shown that the age of another person is presented in various components of his/her appearance: in physical appearance, in expressive behavior (A. A. Bodalev speaks of the 'senile' gait); appearance design, which, according to A. A. Bodalev, "... is an additional sign of age" (Bodalev, 1982, p. 28).

To date, the relationship between different components of appearance in the process of age perception has been studied (Shkurko & Nikolaeva, 2015), and different 'contributions' of various components and elements of appearance to age perception have been identified (Gunn et al., 2009; Vorontsova, 2020a; Vorontsova, 2020b; Flament, Abric, Prunel, Cassier & Delaunay, 2021, 2021). We discovered (Vorontsova, 2022)

gender-specific patterns in the PA construction in the process of perception of male and female peers, depending on gender stereotypes and care practices associated with them. Thus, mature women look younger than their male peers. Younger-looking women equalize their opportunities and resources. Younger women look older than their male peers, which indicates the maturity associated with older PA. It is also shown that the age and gender of the subject of perception influence the construction of the age of male and female peers. The dynamics of the representation of appearance components in the structure of age perception of men and women in youth and old age are described (Vorontsova & Artamonova, 2022).

In this study, we focused on the characteristics of men's and women's attitudes toward their own appearance, which, in our view, is a kind of 'transition' between gender-related expectations and stereotypes and practices in caring for physical appearance, designing appearance, and organizing expressive behavior, which together enable women to look younger than men.

V. A. Labunskaya (2021) emphasized that gender-based research is one of the most important approaches to understanding attitudes toward appearance. V. A. Labunskaya analyzes modern studies and points out that there are the following gender-related differences: men are less satisfied with their bodies than women; women are not satisfied with their bodies, weight, and shape; women strive for thinness, men – for muscularity.

In a number of studies, the gender-related aspect of the study of various parameters of attitudes toward appearance has been described. Thus, the influence of sexual orientation on body dissatisfaction in adult men and women was studied (Beren, Hayden, Wilfley & Grilo, 1996). The effect of body dissatisfaction in men and women related to comparisons with media body images was examined (Van den Berg et al., 2007). Body image and self-esteem depending on age and gender were investigated (Mellor, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2010). The impact of race and gender on the assessment of appearance, orientation toward appearance, and the measure of dissatisfaction with body size was emphasized (Smith, Thompson, Raczynski & Hilner, 1999). The effects of age, gender, ethnicity, and body mass index on body image were documented (Öberg & Tornstam, 1999; Demarest & Allen, 2000; Ålgars et al., 2009).

A considerable amount of work has examined various aspects of PA, its assessment and attitudes toward it in adolescence. Predictors of body dissatisfaction in teenage girls and boys have been identified (Paxton, Eisenberg & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). Relationships between body mass index, body dissatisfaction, weight, and shape were examined (Calzo et al., 2012). The impact of body weight, peer appearance culture, and internalization of appearance ideals was identified (Lawler & Nixon, 2011).

H. L. Quittkat, A. S. Hartmann, R. Düsing, U. Buhlmann and S. Vocks (2019) conducted a survey of a large German-speaking sample (N = 1327) on body dissatisfaction, the importance of appearance, and body image in men and women between the ages of 16 and 88. The authors found that body dissatisfaction and the importance of appearance are

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higher in women than in men. In women, body dissatisfaction does not depend on age; age predicts a lower level of the importance of appearance in men. Women demonstrate their willingness to spend more time in their lives to achieve an ideal appearance. Women of all ages evaluate their body higher than men.

We have found no empirical evidence for the implementation of an integrated approach to study men's and women's attitudes toward their own appearance at different ages (including old age) and their association with PA in large Russian-speaking samples. This enabled us to formulate aims and objectives of empirical research and to justify its relevance. The study was conducted in order to solve the following issue: Identify the impact of gender- and age-related socio-psychological factors on the construction of age perception in the process of social cognition.

This study **aimed** to investigate the characteristics of attitudes toward own appearance and PA in 35-75-year-old men and women. The **hypothesis** of the study was that the parameters of attitudes toward own appearance and PA would differ considerably in men and women at different ages. We also hypothesized that the parameters of attitudes toward appearance determine PA differently in men and women at different ages.

The study was based on the methodology of Russian psychology of social cognition (Andreeva, 2000; Bodalev, 1982, 2015), the socio-psychological approach to appearance developed by V. A. Labunskaya (Labunskaya, 2017, 2019, 2021) and the "multifactorial model of attitudes toward appearance" developed within this approach, in which "its assessments and self-assessments appear to be a cognitive-emotional component of attitudes; satisfaction and concern represent an emotional-motivational component, the desire to transform appearance, associated with perfectionist reactions to appearance, is classified as a behavioral component of attitudes toward appearance (Labunskaya et al., 2019, p. 85); gender-related methodology and the idea of the gender-related approach (Grigorieva, 2018; Kletsina, Ioffe, 2019; Kletsina, 2020; Semenova & Semenova, 2014).

Methods

Study sample

In total, 523 subjects (207 men and 316 women) aged from 35 to 75 years took part in the study as objects of perception (main sample); 140 subjects were subjects of perception ('assessors') in various rounds of presenting photographs to assess the age of objects of perception. The main sample of the study was divided into two subgroups by age in accordance with the age periodization by D. B. Elkonin (Elkonin, 1971): (a) the "maturity" subgroup included participants from 35 to 59 (142 men and 226 women, mean age = 49 years) and (b) the "old age" subgroup included respondents from 60 to 75 years (65 men and 90 women, mean age = 65 years). The study was conducted in 2020-2022. All participants consented to the use of their photographs for psychological research and subsequent publications.

Diagnostic tools

1. The Photo-video Presentation of Appearance procedure by T. A. Vorontsova (Shkurko, 2018) was used to determine the PA of study participants who were photographed (portrait / full-length) and presented for age assessment to 'assessors' (ordinary people, non-experts, at least 20 individuals in one series of photographs for age assessment). A person's PA is the arithmetic mean of all age assessments that are assigned to the object of perception by 'assessors'. Based on this procedure, the difference between the chronological age and PA (CA-PA, or so-called "years saved" (Zimm et al., 2013)) was calculated for each study participant. This indicator represents the age segment by which a person looks older (if it takes negative values) or younger (if it takes positive values) than his/her chronological age.

2. A set of diagnostic tools developed by V. A. Labunskaya to diagnose the attitude toward appearance (Labunskaya & Serikov, 2018; Labunskaya et al., 2019), including:

2.1. The questionnaire to diagnose Attitudes Toward Own Appearance: Satisfaction and Concern developed by V. A. Labunskaya and E. V. Kapitanova was used to determine the degree of satisfaction with own appearance (SA); the degree of concern for own appearance (CA); and the desire to improve own appearance (IA).

2.2. The Scales for Diagnosing Ideas About Assessments of Appearance by Parents and Friends, Fellows, and Teachers by V. A. Labunskaya was used to diagnose ideas about assessments of appearance by male friends (AAMF); female friends (AAFF), parents (AAmother, AAFather), and a chief (AAC). On the basis of the data from the scales, the average values for appearance assessment by significant others (AVAA) were calculated.

2.3. The questionnaire to diagnose Value and Importance of Appearance in Various Spheres of Life developed by V. A. Labunskaya was used to determine the value and importance of appearance in the spheres of communication / friendship (Cm/Fr); academic performance (AP); career (C); family/romantic relationships (Fm/RR); lifestyle (L); happiness (H). On the basis of the data from the questionnaire, the average values for importance of appearance (AVIA) were calculated.

2.4. The questionnaire for the Evaluation/Content Interpretation of Appearance and Its Correspondence with Gender/Age Constructs by V. A. Labunskaya was used to diagnose assessments of the following components of appearance and integral assessments of appearance: facial appearance (FA); bodily appearance (BA); appearance design (AD); expressive behavior (EB); the degree of acceptance of own reflected appearance (DAORA); age-appropriate appearance (AAA); gender-appropriate appearance (GAA); gender role-appropriate appearance (GRAA); professional role-appropriate appearance (PRAA); age-related attractiveness of appearance (ARAA); attractiveness of appearance for an opposite-gender partner (AAOGP); sexual attractiveness of appearance (SAA); satisfaction with appearance (SA) and the integral assessment of own appearance (IAOA).

2.5. The Appearance Perfectionism Scale by K. Srivastava was used to diagnose the level of perfectionism (AP) associated with own appearance.

The reliability of the research results was assured by the use of mathematical statistical methods: descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation analysis, Student's t- test, Levene's test for equal variances, Mann-Whitney U test.

Results

Comparative analysis of the CA-PA indicator ("years saved") and the parameters of men's and women's attitudes toward own appearance in maturity and old age

At the first stage of data processing, we carried out a comparative analysis of the CA-PA indicator and the parameters of the attitude toward own appearance in the male and female subsamples using the Student's t-test. The appropriateness of Student's t-test was checked using the Levene's test for equal variances; otherwise, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. We found that in the male subsample the arithmetic mean of the CA-PA indicator was 0.82 years, and in the female subsample – 2.66 years; the differences are significant ($t = -4.458$, $p = 0.000$). In other words, study participants assess women as much younger than men, and this pattern is not only typical of men and women of the same age as has previously been discovered (Vorontsova, 2022), but also of men and women of different ages, from 35 to 75. Comparisons of the CA-PA indicator for men and women separately by age groups (35–59 and 60–75 years old) showed that there were significant differences between men and women aged 35–59 ($t = -5.278$, $p = 0.000$, M male = - 0.41, M female = 2.08). Notably, no significant differences men and women aged 60–75 years were found ($t = -0.857$, $p = 0.000$, M male = 3.49, M female = 4.12). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the CA-PA indicator among men and women in the age groups studied. Table 2 shows the results of a comparative analysis of the parameters of men's and women's attitudes toward their own appearance in maturity and old age, according to the Student's t-test.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the CA-PA indicator in men and women in maturity and old age

Sample size	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Men (35-75 years)				
207	-18	19	0.82	4.828
<i>Men (35-59 years, maturity)</i>				
142	-18	9	-0.41	4.317

Sample size	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
<i>Men (60-75 years, old age)</i>				
65	-6	19	3.49	4.832
<i>Women (35-75 years)</i>				
316	-10	14	2.66	4.494
<i>Women (35-59 years, maturity)</i>				
226	-10	14	2.08	4.454
<i>Women (60-75 years, old age)</i>				
90	-7	14	4.12	4.276

The analysis of data presented in Table 1 enables us to conclude that in male and female subgroups the greatest difference between chronological age and PA is observed in old age (on average, 3.5 years for men and 4 years for women). This conclusion is also confirmed by the existence of a correlation between age and the CA-PA indicator: in the subgroup of men (N = 207) $r = 0.341$ at $p = 0.000$, in the subgroup of women (N = 316) $r = 0.236$ at $p = 0.000$.

Table 2

Comparative analysis of the parameters of men's and women's attitudes toward their own appearance in maturity and old age, Student's t- test

Indicator	M, males	M, females	t	p	M, males	M, females	t	p
	<i>Maturity</i>				<i>Old age</i>			
CA	4.24	4.78	-2.910	0.004	No significant differences			
IA	6.06	6.95	-3.854	0.000	* The Mann-Whitney U test: group 1 midrank = 61.34, group 2 midrank = 83.72, Z = -3.134, at p = 0.002			
AAMF	7.00	7.42	-2.068	0.039	6.67	7.31	-2.078	0.039

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Indicator	M,	M,	t	p	M,	M,	t	p
	males	females						
<i>Maturity</i>				<i>Old age</i>				
AAmother	* The Mann–Whitney U test: group 1 midrank = 174.65, group 2 midrank = 148.81, Z = -2.539, at p = 0.011				No significant differences			
AP	4.41	4.80	-2.863	0.004	No significant differences			
FA	55.93	61.15	-3.748	0.006	No significant differences			
AD	52.35	58.20	-4.245	0.000	No significant differences			
EB	49.65	52.26	-2.391	0.017	No significant differences			
DAORA	32.20	40.64	-6.781	0.000	No significant differences			
GRAA	23.35	21.69	2.613	0.009	No significant differences			
ARAA	14.16	12.62	2.795	0.005	No significant differences			
AAOGP	28.54	30.01	-2.067	0.039	No significant differences			
SAA	26.38	28.31	-2.677	0.008	No significant differences			
IAOA	416.25	440.38	-2.915	0.004	No significant differences			

Note: M – arithmetic mean; t – Student’s t-test; p – significance level; * – Levene’s test for equal variances showed the inappropriateness of using the Student’s t-test (the Mann-Whitney U test was used); Z – Mann-Whitney test statistic.

A comparative analysis of the parameters of attitudes toward own appearance in men and women in maturity revealed significant differences in all the studied components of attitudes toward appearance:

1. In assessments of individual components and in integral assessments of appearance, women had significantly higher assessments of their own facial appearance, appearance design, expressive behavior; they had higher values of acceptance of their reflected appearance, assessments of the attractiveness of appearance for an opposite-gender partner, and sexual attractiveness of appearance, and integral assessment of appearance. However, the assessment of age-related attractiveness of appearance and the assessment of gender role-appropriate appearance are significantly lowered.
2. Significant differences were found in the ideas about assessments of own appearance. Women believed that their appearance was rated higher by their male friends, and men – by their mothers.
3. Women were significantly more concerned about their appearance.
4. Women had higher rates of desire to improve their appearance and appearance perfectionism.

At the same time, in old age, only two significant differences were found – in 'ideas about assessments of own appearance by male friends' (women were more likely than men to record positive assessments of their appearance by male friends) and the desire to improve own appearance (in women, it is significantly higher than in men).

Relationships between the CA-PA indicator (“years saved”) and the parameters of men’s and women’s attitudes toward own appearance in maturity and old age

At the next stage of data analysis, we conducted Spearman correlation analysis of the CA-PA indicator and the parameters of attitudes toward own appearance separately in subsamples of men and women aged 35–59 years (maturity) and 60–75 years (old age). Table 3 presents the results.

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Table 3

*Significant relationships between the CA-PA indicator ("years saved") and the parameters of attitudes toward own appearance in men and women in maturity and old age, according to the Spearman (correlation coefficient / significance level; * – significant relationships at the significance level of ≤ 0.05 ; ** - significant relationships at significance level of ≤ 0.01)*

Women		Men	
Maturity	Old age	Maturity	Old age
Cm/Fr (0.140*/0.049)			
Career (0.172*/0.015)			
Family (0.195**/0.006)			
AVAA (0.159*/0.025)			SA (0.352**/0.005)
FA (0.161*/0.016)	AAMF (0.281**/0.008)	SA (0.173*/0.047)	AAMF (0.295*/0.022)
BA (0.271**/0.000)	AAC (0.218*/0.048)	AAfather	AVAA (0.267*/0.039)
EB (0.159*/0.016)	AAA (-0.221*/0.036)	(-0.189*/0.047)	Cm/Fr (0.343**/0.007)
AAA (-0.138*/0.038)			IAOA
AAOGP (0.184**/0.006)			(0.267*/0.032)
SAA (0.220**/0.001)			
SA (0.191**/0.004)			
IAOA (0.182**/0.006)			

We found that the CA-PA indicator in the male and female subsamples had a number of relationships with the parameters of attitudes toward own appearance, which are mediated by their age:

1. The CA-PA indicators in mature women (35–59 years) are directly proportional to the value and importance of appearance for communication and friendship, career, family relationships, including the average value of the importance of appearance; with indicators of appearance assessments (facial appearance, bodily appearance, expressive behavior, attractiveness of appearance for an opposite-gender partner, sexual attractiveness, and integral assessment of appearance); with satisfaction with appearance, and inversely proportional to the indicator of age-appropriate appearance. That is, women aged 35–59 years who assess their appearance as not appropriate for their age have a high value and significance of appearance, especially in the areas of communication and friendship, career and family relationships; have positive assessments of their appearance, especially their facial appearance, bodily appearance, expressive behavior, attractiveness and sexual attractiveness; they are also satisfied with their appearance, looking much younger for their age in the eyes of others.
2. The CA-PA indicators in elderly women are to a lesser extent determined by the parameters of attitudes toward own appearance. Inversely proportional relationships with the assessment of age-appropriate appearance and directly proportional relationships with the indicators of appearance assessment by others (male friends and a chief) were recorded. Elderly women, who look much younger for their years, recognize the discrepancy between their appearance and their age and record high assessments of their appearance by men and their chiefs (if they were currently working, then real assessments, if not, then retrospective ones).
3. The CA-PA indicators in men aged 35–59 have a directly proportional relationship with the indicator of satisfaction with own appearance and an inversely proportional relationship with the father's assessment of appearance; at the age of 60–75 – also with the indicator of satisfaction with own appearance, with the assessment of appearance by significant others (especially male friends), with the indicator of the importance of appearance for communication and friendship, as well as with the integral assessment of appearance. The analysis carried out reveals a particular role of men's satisfaction with their own appearance in the process of construction PA. Those subjects who are satisfied with their appearance are identified by others as looking much younger for their age. Unlike women, the "saved years" of elderly men are more closely related to the parameters of attitudes toward their own appearance. The subjects with a high integral assessment of appearance, as well as the assessment of appearance by significant others (especially male friends), look younger for their age.

Discussion

The study showed that mature women look significantly younger than men of the same age; in old age, the difference between chronological age and PA between men and women is insignificant (both, on average, are 3.5–4 years younger for their age). This conclusion confirms the pattern found in men and women of the same mature age (Demidov, Dibedev & Kutenev, 2012; Vorontsova, 2022). The limitation of the previous study was the limited range of models for age assessment (male and female peers); in this study the sample comprised more than 500 subjects.

We also found significant gender-related differences in the attitude toward own appearance in mature men and women, which, in our opinion, can explain the difference we discovered in their PA. Women have more positive assessments of individual components of appearance (facial appearance, appearance design, expressive behavior) and integral assessments of appearance (a high degree of acceptance of the so-called “reflected appearance” (V. A. Labunskaya’s term means an individual’s acceptance of own reflection in the mirror, photographs, videos, etc.), highly assess sexual attractiveness of appearance, in general, have a high integral assessment of their appearance); women are more concerned about their appearance, high rates of desire to improve their appearance and appearance-perfectionism. Previously, we explained the difference in perceptions of the age of peers – men and women – by gender expectations and stereotypes of the subjects of perception (in other words, we have seen the reasons for gender asymmetry in age perception in the eyes of observers). And now we have identified another most important factor in the construction of PA – this is the attitude toward own appearance of the object of perception. Thus, high concern about own appearance, the desire to improve it, a higher level of perfectionism associated with own appearance in women (compared to men), positive fixation on own appearance (positive assessments of appearance components and integral assessments) set the strategies and practices of appearance organization in women and result in women looking much younger than men. At the same time, we believe that observed differences show the effect of the same gender-age stereotypes and expectations, but at the level of the object of perception. Thus, I. S. Kletsina and E. V. Ioffe (2019) write that concern about own appearance is the norm for female role behavior. I. S. Kletsina (2020) emphasizes that in a traditional society the status of an aging woman is significantly lower than that of an aging man. Scientists (Berman, O’Nan, Floyd, 1981; Kletsina, 2020) document the existence of a “double standard of aging” (women are held to higher standards regarding aging than men), which, apparently, encourages women to undergo constant transformations and self-care practices that target younger appearance. The French philosopher P. Brückner (2021) points out that there is a gender stereotype that “a woman ages, a man matures”, or “a woman becomes ugly with age, and a man becomes more beautiful”, which effect can be observed, among other things, in our data. Thus, with all the positive assessments of appearance described above, women, compared to men, have a lower assessment of

the age-related attractiveness of own appearance ($t = 2.795$, $p = 0.005$). They are more concerned about external signs of aging than men and believe that with age they become less attractive. Men, on the contrary, believe that they do not lose their attractiveness with age. It was also found that men had more positive perceptions of their mothers' assessments of own appearance, compared to women. The results of our study coincide with those of H. L. Quittkat and colleagues (2019) obtained in a German sample: both our study and the study of our German colleagues show that women have a more positive assessment of own appearance and a pronounced behavioral component of attitudes toward appearance. Meanwhile, we do not observe differences in satisfaction with appearance and its value and importance in different areas, while our German colleagues record higher dissatisfaction with bodily appearance and the importance of appearance among women. The differences in results may be due to the fact that Western colleagues first record indicators of attitudes toward the physical components of appearance, while we rely on the understanding of appearance as a phenomenon related to "different stages of life based on dynamic and variable relationships of the following three components: 1) physical appearance, 2) social appearance, and 3) expressive behavior (Labunskaya & Drozdova, 2017 p. 202).

We also observed the relationship between the "years saved" indicator and the parameters of attitudes toward own appearance in men and women. Thus, these relationships are mediated by the life stage. This conclusion confirms the most important provisions of the social psychology of appearance (Bodalev, 1982, 2015; Labunskaya et al., 2019) on the relationship between the perception and assessments of appearance (own and others') and the stage of life of both the subject and the object of perception. We find the following particularly important and interesting:

1. The most significant correlations between the indicators studied were found in mature women, some of which were related to the parameters of attitudes toward appearance, which have significant differences in women and men. These are assessments of facial appearance, expressive behavior, attractiveness of appearance, sexual attractiveness of appearance, and integral assessment of own appearance. Women who show high levels of these indicators look younger for their age, which also explains why mature women look younger than mature men. The data obtained once again confirm the role of the face as "the most important tool of communication" (Bodalev, 1982, p. 17), as a key object of cognition, a means of communication and organization of activities in various contexts (Anan'eva, Barabanshchikov & Demidov, 2019, 2021).
2. Even if we analyze only strong relationships (at a significance level of ≤ 0.01), the degree of discrepancy between the PA and the real age of a mature woman increases with high indices of value, importance of appearance in the sphere of family relationships, positive assessments of own bodily appearance, attractiveness of appearance for an opposite-gender partner, sexual attractiveness of appearance, satisfaction with appearance and high integral assessment of own appearance;

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elderly women – with high assessments of appearance by male friends; elderly men – with high satisfaction with own appearance and high indices of value and significance of appearance for communication and friendship. The results confirmed empirically the “multifactorial model of attitudes toward appearance”, developed by V. A. Labunskaya and colleagues in 2019, which cornerstone is the value and importance of appearance.

3. A particular role of satisfaction with appearance was discovered for the indicator of “years saved” among mature and elderly men ($CA-PA\&SA = 0.173$, $p = 0.047$ in the sample of mature men, $CA-PA\&SA = 0.352$, $p = 0.005$ in the sample of elderly men).

The **limitation** of the study may be the so-called ‘survivorship bias’ associated with studies of elderly samples (Blackburn, Epel, 2016), since age limits for elderly subjects in our study go beyond the average life expectancy of Russian men, which, according to pre-pandemic UN 2019 forecasts (Thomas et al., 2019) was 66.81 years.

Further research should aim to identify additional factors of PA in elderly male and female samples, as the results suggest that other psychological factors may affect the PA of individuals at this stage of life, and also to study gender-related aspects of the mechanisms for the process of age construction of unfamiliar others based on the perception of their appearance.

Highlights

1. The perceived age of mature men and women differs significantly: women look much younger than men (women’s “years saved” indicator is 2.5 years higher than that of men); in old age, the differences in “years saved” between men and women are insignificant; on average, they look 3.5–4 years younger for their chronological age.
2. Significant gender differences were discovered in men’s and women’s attitudes toward their own appearance, explaining the differences in the perceived age of men and women. Women have a positive assessment of the individual components of appearance and their integral assessment; they are more concerned about their appearance, are more committed to improve their appearance, have a higher degree of appearance-perfectionism and a lower assessment of the age-related attractiveness of their appearance.
3. The relationship between men’s and women’s “saved years” indicators and the parameters of their attitudes toward appearance, which are mediated by their stage of life, is described; it has been shown that, compared to elderly women, the age perceived by women in maturity is more determined by their attitudes toward appearance. The role of men’s satisfaction with their own appearance in the construction of their age in the social cognition process has been identified.

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Conflict of Interest Information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.