Sociolinguistic and statistical methods to improve health communication between the elderly, caregivers and institutions: The Age.Vol.A. research project

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INTRODUCTION


“By 2030 Italy will be the fourth oldest country in the world”
(Euromonitor International 2015)
PROJECT PHASES

- Study of senior and caregiver population of Varese
- Theoretical model of communication
- Design of multilingual apps/tools
ELDERLY CARE: TWO DEEPLY CONNECTED PHENOMENA

AGEING OF POPULATION

In 2018 the 29.4% of Italy’s population was over 60 years old (Indexmundi 2018).

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION (ESPECIALLY FEMALE WORKERS)

Female domestic workers represent, in Italy, the 88.3% of the entire sector. The 73% of them are not Italian (Inps e Associazione Domina 2019).
SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

Identity
- elderly
- caregiver

Society
- elderly/caregiver
- family/caregiver

Culture
- services
- communities

Vicentini et. Al. 2018a
AIM: CONTENTS OF THE DIGITAL OUTPUT

Multilingual glossaries  Healthcare information  Physician contacts
Medication reminder  Institutional information  Administrative procedures
Emergency procedures  Family contacts  Social services

Vicentini et. Al., 2018a
The objective of the Internet-based survey is to identify the most relevant elements of the relationship between foreign caregivers, the assisted elderly and the families of the elderly from a linguistic/communicative perspective (Russo et. al. 2019; Vicentini et. al. 2018b).

The questions are based on preliminary interviews with focus groups of the populations.

Main topics: linguistic resources, communicative needs, work habits, migratory project.

The survey was firstly sent to the staff and students of the University of Insubria in April 2020 and then spread to the general public (through a press campaign) in June 2020.
AGEVOLA SURVEY 2020

The survey comprises 3 separate questionnaires addressing the 3 target populations: each of them comprises specific questions, with different aspects of the main topics.

The same aspects are analysed from the perspectives of all the actors involved in elderly care.

The output of the survey will be the basis for the web-based resources (app, web portal) to help the actors receive the information they need for their day-to-day activities.

Using descriptive statistics, a technique used to describe or summarise data patterns (Agresti & Finley 2015; Paruolo 1999), in the next slides we would this phase’s most significant elements will be presented.
PRELIMINARY RESULTS
FOCUS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FAMILIES

We have received 106 responses (10 June 2020).
78% are from the province of Varese.
The most represented cities are Varese, Busto Arsizio, Luino and Malnate.
Nephews and nieces represent 70% of respondents and, considering the gender, 76% are female and 23% are male.
27% of sample takes care of two or more elderly patients.
PRELIMINARY RESULTS
PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVERS

Using secondary data from the questionnaire for families, the profile of the professional carer can be identified as follows:

- **Working time**
  - There is a relevant turnover. The clear majority (60%) of professional carers have been working with their current patient for less than two years.

- **Workdays**
  - 86% of sample works more than 5 days per week and 3 out of 4 more than 20 hours per week.

- **Nationality**
  - The three most represented countries are Ukraine (32%), Italy (20%) and Moldavia (6%).
Median age of the sample: 82
The sample is made by 66 females and 40 males.

Only 56% of the elderly live in the same house with the professional carer!

41% of the sample is not self sufficient.
The three most common self-sufficient activities (eating, bathing, dressing) are present only in 40% of sample.

9 out of 106 report no diseases.
The four most common diseases are: hypertension (29%), diabetes (21%), arthrosis (21%), arthritis (21%).
WORK AND LANGUAGE

From the survey there is no evidence of a problematic relation between work and time spent with the elder. In fact, 89% of respondents stated that (in the described situation) they have had no significant changes in their working time or workplace in recent years.

• The majority of sample speaks with their relatives in Italian.
WEEK-TIME WITH RELATIVES

“How many days per week do you spend with your elderly relative?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days Per Week</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 day a week</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 days a week</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 days a week</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 days a week</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 days a week</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using a 5 points likert scale (from 1 to 5) (Marradi & Gasperoni 2007), families evaluated carers’ performances in various daily tasks. Considering the overall results, there are no critical aspects apart from cooking and house cleaning (slightly).
CAREGIVERS AND COVID-19

Due to the coronavirus pandemic we have decided to analyse possible changes in the behaviours of families, carers and elderly patients.

Regarding the working relationship between cares and patients, strong evidence emerged: 73% of respondents declared that the carer spends the same time (or also more than in the past) with the assisted senior.

Considering the relationships within families, it is important to underline that 50% of respondents affirmed that they have spent less time or no time with their elderly relative during this pandemic event.
CONCLUSION

As the main addressees of our project are the assisted elderly and their caregivers, besides families, the outcomes of the survey which is illustrated in this presentation were inevitably affected by the coronavirus pandemic. As is well known, this has had an important impact on such social categories.

Nonetheless, some findings have emerged so far which are statistically and sociologically relevant to enhancing our knowledge about the condition of the actors involved.

It is hoped that a larger sample of elders and caregivers will be involved in the next survey phases.
REFERENCES


