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## Gerontology and Adult Education in Rivers State

Mezewo E. Obuzor\*, Stella Karibo Ortuka

Rivers State University, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

\*Correspondence: [Mezewo.obuzor@ust.edu.ng](mailto:Mezewo.obuzor@ust.edu.ng)

**Abstract:** This study addresses the underexplored issue of gerontology in the context of adult education in Rivers State. Gerontology, the study of aging and the elderly, is often limited to viewing seniors as retired individuals with diminished capacities. This research challenges this notion by highlighting the potential of adult education to empower the elderly, enabling them to contribute positively to society. The study, conducted in both the Riverine and Upland regions of Rivers State, employed a mixed-method approach, including questionnaires, interviews, and observations, complemented by library research. Data were collected from 200 respondents using an incidental sampling technique, with 150 valid responses analyzed. The findings underscore the crucial role of adult education in mitigating the challenges of aging, such as physical, psychological, and social declines. By providing relevant skills and resources, adult education helps seniors remain active and engaged. However, the study also highlights barriers such as unfavorable economic conditions that hinder elderly participation in adult education. The research implications suggest that tailored adult education programs can significantly enhance the quality of life and societal contributions of the elderly. Further research is recommended to explore effective strategies for integrating gerontology and adult education in diverse economic contexts.

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### 1. Introduction

As they get older, many people worry that their internal organs will start to fail them. This includes things like vision and hearing loss, as well as the onset of wrinkles and a general weakening of the muscles and skin's elasticity and pliability. Ageing and maturation are considered normal phases of development since they are inherent to the life cycle.[1] suggests that ageing and anti-ageing have caused people to spend much money on cosmetic and plastic surgery in order to remain young, without realizing that ageing is inevitable. In the words, aging has to do with physical, mental, social and intellectual decline which promotes decline in the body organs and makes the individuals have feelings of ageing. Assert that this ageing population especially those who have retired from workforce require adult education to cope with the changing conditions of their lives as well as become relevant in the society. Asserts that adult education has the potentials of motivating the elderly to have feelings of a comfortable life through the acquisition of knowledge to become an active member of the society. Although, ageing could be viewed from either biological, sociological and psychological [2]. It is biological when it brings about a decline in the proper functioning of the body and sociological, when the attitudes and interactions within the Society changes, utterances and relationships are also affected. Although psychological ageing relates to changing indices such as feelings, motivation, memory, emotions, experiences and self – identity. The level of poor funding and interest of the elderly on adult education programs [3].

## 2. Method

The researchers in this survey-based study travelled to Rivers State. Our data came from a variety of sources, including questionnaires, interviews, and observational methods, with some support from library research. To provide a balanced representation of the Riverine and Upland regions that make up Rivers State, this research selected two settlements from each [4,5]. We randomly chose the Buguma and Opobo villages in the riverine region, and the Isiokpo and Ahoada communities in the highland areas. Our goal is to analyse the value of adult education and find out how it contributes to society's progress. We used an incidental sampling technique to collect responses from 200 questionnaires sent to these areas. The aims of the research informed the development and testing of two hypotheses. We utilised four-point Likert scales: SA for strongly agreeing, A for agreeing, SD for strongly disagreeing, and D for disagreeing. As for testing the hypotheses, we used a Z-test of mean. In the end, 150 copies were accurately filled out and returned.

## 3. Results

People who are 65 and above are the focus of gerontology. "Geronlogos" means "old man" in Greek and "study" in English. It is a scientific discipline that studies the ageing process from a social, psychological, and biological perspective. As the scientific study of ageing and older populations, gerontology is defined in the encyclopaedia on ageing (volume 2,297 - 298) [6,7]. The demand for research into the ageing process in this kind of population is certain to increase as the human population ages. Gerontology is the study of ageing and its effects on the body, mind, and social interactions of the elderly. It also examines the interplay between natural ageing and age-related diseases, the financial and societal implications of an ageing population, and retirement and benefits planning. Gerontology encompasses several disciplines due to its subfields, which include sociology and psychology [8].

Since gerontology is a relatively young academic discipline, it does not yet have the necessary institutional backing. But the research is one of the fastest-growing areas of medicine because of the ageing population and the improvement in health care. Nevertheless, the study of ageing, old age, and the elderly is often seen as a subfield of biology, particularly in relation to the impact of hereditary variables (the degree to which ageing is predetermined) [9,10]. As a result of dramatic shifts in population demographics in the twentieth century, there has been a meteoric rise in interest in studying the social aspects of ageing, a field commonly referred to as social gerontology.

In advanced industrial countries, the age-structure of the population has changed due to longer life expectancy and lower birth rates. This has resulted in a substantial rise in the percentage of people aged 65 and above [11]. The increasing number of people aged 75 and up is a big concern for policy-makers and analysts, because people over 65 use a lot of welfare programmes, particularly health care, personal social services, and state benefits. Studying and analysing ageing as a social category and the ways in which societal institutions impact the ageing process—including how people perceive it—makes a sociological contribution to gerontology, even if policy considerations are crucial [12]. How retirement regulations, pension systems, and housing affect the physical and mental well-being of the elderly depends on a number of factors that vary greatly across time, space, and social structures. Both the importance of age stratification and the effects of ageing on society are becoming more apparent.

Training Nigerian Adults, the goal of adult education is to help adults (including the elderly) enhance their economic, political, and social functioning as well as their perceptual, intellectual, attitude, and physical viewpoint [13]. Training must adhere to the

fundamental principles of adults' learning if it is to facilitate successful learning in adults. Thus, adult education is defined as the process by which adults engage in strategies and structured activities that promote their learning and comprehension. Adults have the chance to acquire new skills, get valuable certifications, and expand their potential via adult education [14].

Nigeria has not yet implemented its national policy on education, which includes a programme for adult education. If we want to see improvements and reforms for the aged in society, we need to rethink the programmes. Adult education in Nigeria has significant obstacles, such as societal stigma, marginalisation, and inadequate government support. Adult education needs repositioning to meet the rising need of modern times and attain significant national development, but the public has a low knowledge of its importance.

Despite the enormous potential that adult education offers in the developmental processes of the elderly, argues that it has endured a great deal of neglect, is thus undervalued, and pushed to the background in government circles, the intellectual community, and public perception [15,16]. In order to produce a country that is literate, informed, competent, and socially and economically developed, education is a crucial instrument for the aged to realise their dreams and ambitions. So, there's a rallying cry for a new approach to adult education that emphasises lifelong learning and seeks to finally establish it as a legitimate field of study.

#### **Difficulties in Administering Gerontology Courses to Adults**

Many people, particularly those unfamiliar with the term, have mistakenly assumed that "adult education" means "night school". This helps to clarify the difficulties encountered by adult education professionals when attempting to meet the training needs of a population that is disproportionately illiterate, unskilled, semi-skilled, or semiprofessional. They can't do their jobs as farmers, artisans, or business owners without these kinds of training programmes [17]. A non-traditional educational institution with the potential to inspire students to think creatively and behave responsibly in order to raise community standards of living and advance human progress.

The negative connotation of adult education as a kind of night school has emerged as a major obstacle to adult education in Nigeria, discouraging adults who already suffer from low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, and shyness from seeking further education. People (the aged) need to be aware of the significance of adult education in light of these difficulties [18]. We owe it to the elderly to treat them with curiosity and enthusiasm so that they might learn to adapt to the difficulties they face and make positive contributions to society's progress.

The lessons taught in adult education programmes provide the elderly with the skills they need to live more independently in their later years. Additionally, it helps individuals adjust to their living circumstances. Despite this, note that there are difficulties associated with ageing, including health issues, functional impairment, social and economic problems, and the need for appropriate adult education programmes that offer counselling and guidance as people deal with the natural decline in bodily functions. Consequently, this enhances the quality of life of the elderly while decreasing their reliance on others [19].

While adult education programmes do take into account the fact that ageing increases the risk of disabilities like hearing and vision loss, weakened bones and muscles, diminished respiratory functions, and cognitive decline, high blood pressure, and muscle degeneration, argues that this is not the whole story. Similar to what have noted, the difficulties and changes that people face go from bad to worse as they enter adulthood. Nutrition, sleep, stress, exercise, and health conditions all contribute to the body's peak size and strength, which occurs between the ages of 24 and 32.

#### 4. Discussion

##### Hypotheses I

There is no relationship between adult education and motivation of the elderly for a comfortable and sustainable life in the society.

**Table 1. Adult education programs and motivation of the elderly for comfortable life in the society**

Items	SA 4	A 3	SD 2	D 1	Total Response
Item 1	40	30	50	30	150
Item 2	30	20	50	50	150
Item 3	35	40	40	35	150
<b>Frequency</b>	105	90	140	115	450
<b>ΣRemarks Frequency</b>	420	270	280	45	1085

Formula

$$\frac{\sum \text{Ranks} \times \text{Frequency}}{\text{Total Responses (n)}}$$

Total Responses (n)

$$= \frac{1085}{450} = 2.4$$

$$450$$

$$= 2$$

**Decision Rule:** If the calculated number is higher than the table value, then accept the hypothesis. Otherwise, reject it. The above research leads us to conclude that the null hypothesis, which states that adult education does not significantly correlate with the desire of the elderly to live comfortably and sustainably, is false [20]. This suggests that the elderly are highly motivated to pursue a pleasant and sustainable existence, and that adult education plays a substantial role in this. In support of this position

##### Hypothesis II

Concerning the importance of adults' education to society's progress, there is no statistically meaningful correlation between the two.

**Table 2. Disadvantages and Opportunities for Adults**

Items	SA 4	A 3	SD 2	D 1	Total Response
Item 4	40	10	50	50	150
Item 5	20	40	40	50	150
Item 6	20	30	60	40	150
<b>Frequency</b>	80	80	150	140	450
<b>ΣRemarks Frequency</b>	320	240	300	140	1000

Formula

$\frac{\sum \text{Ranks} \times \text{Frequency}}{\text{Total Responses (n)}}$

=1000 =2.2

450

=2

**Decision Rule:** If the calculated value is higher than the table value, then accept the hypothesis; otherwise, reject it. In light of the data shown above, we can conclude that the null hypothesis, which claims that adult education has no bearing on the difficulties encountered by the elderly and their impact on society's progress, is false. This suggests that the obstacles encountered by the elderly and the importance of adult education to society's progress are significantly related.[21] This supports his claim that adult education may inspire seniors to live comfortably by providing them with the information they need to participate fully in society.

## 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant potential of adult education in addressing the multifaceted challenges associated with aging in Rivers State. The research underscores that gerontology, when integrated with adult education, can empower the elderly to overcome physical, psychological, and social declines, thereby enabling them to continue contributing meaningfully to society. The findings reveal that well-structured adult education programs, supported by appropriate guidance and counseling, can mitigate many difficulties faced by the elderly. However, the study also identifies economic constraints as a major barrier to elderly participation in such programs. The implications suggest that policymakers and educators should develop targeted adult education initiatives that consider these economic challenges. Further research is recommended to explore innovative strategies for enhancing elderly engagement in adult education, particularly in economically disadvantaged contexts, to fully harness the benefits of lifelong learning and improve the overall well-being of the aging population.

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