

READINESS OF OLDER ADULT LEARNERS' PARTICIPANTS IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined the Readiness of Older Adult Learners' Participants in Adult Literacy Programmes in Nigeria. It is obvious that society change the life of older adult learners as it may be positively or negatively, limited amount of literature has discussed older adults learning in literacy programmes, especially their readiness to learn. Specifically, this paper argues that the impact of literacy programme can function as a stimulating learning environment that helps older adults meet their late-life development needs and can lead them toward a meaningful and positive aging experience. Materials were generated via internet, textbooks and other documents relevant to the paper. The paper found that social interaction has great influence in older adult learner classes. The overall results shows that literacy programmes assist in promoting older adult learners' class, as it helps to expose where learner is lacking and how the facilitators can help. It was therefore suggested that government should make policies that would aid older adult literacy programmes to become achievable in the country. There should be collective efforts by the facilitators and all other stakeholders to ensure sound literacy programmes for older adult in Nigeria.

Keywords: Readiness, Older Adult, Adult Literacy Programme

Introduction

The number of older adults is increasing dramatically around the world. The proportion of people age 60 and over is growing faster than any other age group (United Nations, 2010). Due to this trend, learning has become an important pathway to improve older adults' quality of life in many countries. Numerous studies show that older adults are increasingly engaged in both formal and non-formal educational programs with particular attention to literacy programmes in Nigeria (Danner, 2018). Specifically, there has been a recent increase in the number of older adults enrolled in literacy programmes. However, with the increasing number of older adults entering various literacy programmes, a limited amount of literature has discussed older adults' readiness to learn in literacy programmes. (Mulenga, 2018). The "readiness to learn" is closely related to motivation and reasons for participation in learning activities; which is a much-studied topic in the adult education research field (Danner, 2018).

Although older adults often have specific motives and seems to be very motivated for learning, other aspects must also be in place in order to really effectuate these motives. Thompson (2012) identified self-improvement, family responsibilities, job participation, advancement, urging by other people, social expectations and relationships, escape from bore dome and stimulation and cognitive interest as a basic reason behind the readiness of older adults' participants in literacy programmes. Needs attract to the attach older adults to take part in literacy programmes. For instance, an older adult learner who

lacks social and economic rewards tend to participate in functional literacy programmes so as to improve these needs. Therefore, this paper aims to understand the readiness of older adults' learners' participants in learning, specifically, what are older adults' motivations in the context of literacy programmes in Nigeria.

Defining old

The ageing process is of course a biological reality which has its own dynamic, largely beyond human control. However, it is also subject to the constructions by which each society makes sense of old age. In the developed world, chronological time plays a paramount role. The age of 60 or 65, roughly equivalent to retirement ages in most developed countries, is said to be the beginning of old age. In many parts of the developing world, chronological time has little or no importance in the meaning of old age. Other socially constructed meanings of age are more significant such as the roles assigned to older people; in some cases, it is the loss of roles accompanying physical decline which is significant in defining old age. Thus, in contrast to the chronological milestones which mark life stages in the developed world, old age in many developing countries is seen to begin at the point when active contribution is no longer possible." (Graham, 2020)

Psychosocial Development of Older Adults

Theories of adult development attempt to predict both changes and stability. Particularly, some theories of psychosocial development show the tendency of older adults' motivation is toward positive and growth. For example, Carl G. Jung (1933) stated that old age is the period when the elderly withdraws themselves from the outside world and focus on themselves. Additionally, he believed that people are meant to progress in a positive direction and not just adapt. of particular importance to this research is Erick Erickson's (1986) last two stages of adult development. Generativity is to concern for the next generation, going beyond love for one's own children or grandchildren to a humble and caring desire for the next generation. Integrity reveals the need for older adults to find meaning in their existence and to make meaning of what they have done and are doing in their lives. Specifically, generativity helps people to achieve integrity, which is an experience that conveys some world order and spiritual sense (Erikson, 1994). Additionally, Laura L. Carstensen's (1995) Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST) provides the lens to understand the readiness, participation and motivation specifically of old-old adults and above. SST also suggests that generativity is one of the motivators for older adults which includes goals such as being or becoming a keeper of the meaning as well as taking responsibility for future generations (Lang & Carstensen, 2002).

The Concept of Literacy

Literacy is an instrument for acquiring relevant knowledge and skills required for development. This implies that older adults cannot acquire information and knowledge required for their survival without literacy is seen as a tool for developing skills knowledge and attitudes for the daily survival of human persons. A literate person is one who is able to read, write and understand and simple written text about his daily life. Literacy is very critical for development in the contemporary society because it is used to improve the living conditions of older adults in the society. The potency of literacy is hinged on its ability to liberate and emancipate the recipient from ignorance which is an obstacle to self- fulfillment of an individual.

Readiness of Older Adult Learners' Participants in Adult Literacy Programmes

Motivation plays an important role in achieving the readiness of older adult learners in learning process (Mulenga & Liang, 2008). Presently, much research in the field of educational gerontology has centered around this issue. Specifically, many studies showed that cognitive interest and a desire to learn are older adult learners' readiness factors to learn, whether in non-formal education or formal education. Also, O'Connor (1987) found that these motivations appear to be more important for older than for middle-aged learner. Furthermore, personal growth and satisfaction are also older adults' readiness factors for learning, with some studies finding these motivators particularly salient. Pourchot (1999) indicated that older adults' participation in literacy appears to be both a response to motivational needs toward personal development and a source and context for ongoing personal growth. Little (1995) found the functions of older adults seeking for acquisition of literacy skills including improvement of self-esteem, reduction of some adverse effects of ageing, facilitating a sense of caring and providing a new focus while grieving. Furthermore, Gram and Donaldson (1996) indicated that literacy programme experiences were a stimulus for a change in attitudes, values, and interests for older adults, and many of these changes had begun prior to entering school. Also, they argued that for adults, literacy programme was often a continuation of and a response to a growth process that had already begun. Additionally, social contact or other social interaction is an important motivation of older adult learners (Kim & Merriam, 2004).

Factors that motivate older adult learners' readiness to participate in literacy programs are a timeless issue in lifelong learning. The older adult is a complete personality, which, although often difficult to return to the classroom for many reasons, internal and external, is forced by the difficult conditions of everyday life to return to the field of education and act fast. Factors that motivate an adult to participate in literacy programs are the need that arises from his or her effort not to remain unemployed and consequently not to be marginalized, to self-actualization, to be socially recognized and at the same time fulfill personal needs and ambitions, and to grow professionally and financially. The main role in the effort of the older adult learner is played by the trainer, who must treat the adult with sensitivity, respect his needs, orient the whole educational process with him in the center and based on the needs, expectations and peculiarities. Bringing his experiences to the forefront and turning them into a source of knowledge. An attempt is made to confirm the theory with practice, regarding the factors that make it easier for adults to participate in an educational program

According to Kim (2020) the readiness of older adult learners' participants in literacy programme in Nigeria will be achieved due to the influence of the following factors. In other words, older adult become ready to the need to achieve the following:

Desire for knowledge: Learning new knowledge and constructing knowledge are the important motivation that trigger the readiness of older adult to learn. Sometimes older adults want knowledge that is based on their prior experiences.

Desire for stimulation: Having the chance to exercise their mind is also one of the vital reasons that older adults engaged in learning adult literacy programme. Additionally, the older adult learners' participants not only enjoyed the chance to exercise their brain but also the chance to gain a deeper understanding and sharpen what they had known or learned before.

Desire for self-fulfillment: Attending literacy programmes among older adults' learners provided chances for self-actualization to them. Now, by returning to his studies, he is able to plug in his new academic accomplishments into his employment mix.

Desire for generativity: Being or becoming "a keeper of the meaning" as well as taking responsibility for future generations are also the readiness factors motivating older adult learners' participants to participate in literacy programmes in Nigeria. This also provides them with feelings of integrity for being the most functional older adult learners.

Learning as a transition: Literacy programmes in Nigeria provides older adult learners' participants with the chance to transition to another life or career or to seek to begin another career after he retires.

Older Adult Learners' Readiness in Adult Literacy Programmes

In general context, learner readiness is often used to define the ability of a learner to acquire knowledge and initiate in behavior change which led to effective and successful learning outcomes. In terms of educational policies and implementation, learner readiness is closely related to early childhood education and school readiness as it refers the capacity to engage actively in the learning process.

Zimmerman (1990) refers to self-regulated learning strategies as both actions and processes which are directed at the acquisition of target information or skills. These strategies are related to how the older adult learners perceive the relevant agency, purpose and instrumentality involved in their learning processes. It is believed that most learners employ self-regulation to a certain degree. Zimmerman (1990) suggested that there are specific traits among self-regulated learners, namely: their awareness of strategic relations between regulatory processes or responses and learning outcomes and their use of the said strategies to reach their academic goals.

Numerous studies have been conducted to identify the degrees of self-regulated learning and readiness among the learners at various levels across majors, year, and even gender. With all study limitations taken into consideration, the findings vary – significantly in some areas and factors - but they do share some common ground findings. They confirm that regardless of the learning strategies employed, self-regulation can be taught which means that

According to numerous advocates of learner readiness, a magnitude of terms and concepts are coined and deployed. Among these, some of those that predominate are learner autonomy, self-efficacy, self-regulation or self-directed learning, responsible learning, learner's attitudes and beliefs toward language acquisition, learner's intellectual character and learning strategies. The notions of learner readiness are often integrated and intertwined with learner autonomy and self-regulated learning when used to define the process in which learners are able to actively and effectively control and monitor their motivation, cognition and behaviors and successfully complete the target academic tasks (Blidi, 2017; Zimmerman, 2011).

Where an understanding of programmes where an understanding of motivations is relevant as in adult education programmes this is due to the distinctive nature of adult learners. Learning for most adults in voluntary and most adult learners benefit from successful completion of the programmes. Older adult

learners are independent learners who must be convinced of the content and method of the programmes before they enroll for it. They participate in functional literacy programmes to reason best known to them. They are motivated due a gap or pressing need that needs to be satisfied or met. Older adult learners believe that if they participate in literacy programmes it will help to reduce poverty, to develop themselves socially economically, politically, psychological and to satisfy their felt needs. Behavioral theory of motivation says that for the organism to respond positively to a given condition, will automatically lead to improvement in the organism's life. The need for self- actualization also motivates them to take part in functional literacy programmes. The process theory of motivation also states the engaging in an activity the individual will consider the probability of the goal. Older adult learners are also motivated if the location for the functional literacy programmes is accessible.

Reasons for the Readiness of Older Adult Learners

Show that they all motivate adult learner's participation in functional literacy programmes.

- Learner's objectives in participating in literacy programmes: The adult learners were satisfied with this factor probably because they see it as means of development in their lives.
- Social interaction or relationship influence older adult learner's participation in function literacy programmes? The learners are motivated by these factors because they see the means of learning so that they can interact and socialize with their environment. This factor is in agreement to Maslow's hierarch of human needs of chapter two.
- Psychological characteristics of older adult learners showed that respondents are motivated in order to know how to cope mentally in any situation they find themselves. This is applicable to Herberg's and Maslow's hierarchy of human need. They are of the views that adult needs to have certain need that propel them into any action.
- Economic Reason: After analysis of this factor, it showed that a lot of adult learner's motive in participating in functional literacy programmes is due to economic reasons or factor. For example, they take part in order to learn how to compute, know how to read and write in order to improve on their business transactions, vocations and employment as the case may be (Cullen 1994).

Difficulties Faced by Older Adults in Adult Literacy Programme

Because of their special learning needs, older adult learners might encounter numerous barriers that could influence their readiness to learn. ACE (2008) indicated that older adult learners in literacy programme might have three types of barriers including demographic, attitudinal, and structural barriers. Demographic barriers relate to age itself including health, time, race and geography issues. Attitude barriers mean that the ageism can come from older adults themselves or other people. Older adults might have negative attitudes toward becoming active participants in literacy programmes. Also, educators may possess stereotypes of older adults. These all can result in older adults' having challenges in attending literacy programmes. Structural barriers, including lack of transportation, support services, and financing, often keep older adults from succeeding in higher education. Lack of funding is consistently cited as one of the top reasons why older adults don't pursue higher education.

- **Demographic barriers:** All the participants expressed demographic barriers to learning

and their studies, which resulted from age. Issues around memory are the main barrier that

participants experienced, lack of time was also a demographic barrier,

- **Attitude barriers:** Age bias existed for older adult participants themselves and others when they were studying. It is believed that this experience had been an unfortunate aspect in his studies, most of the learning environment did not respect older adult learners so much enough and this influenced his learning and outcomes.
- **Structures barriers:** Courses that were too structured were a barrier for participants. Mack mentioned that although he appreciated that courses were organized and very structured in his study, the inflexibility made him exhausted. Sunny also mentioned that too many courses made her tired enough to lose some motivation.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it will be concluded that, older adult learners have readiness factors that are motivating their participation in adult literacy programmes in Nigeria. This is due to the fact that, they have gaps that need to be met in order to enhance their well-being. It showed that they have motives they want to acquire in order to be up and doing in the society to which they belongs. These needs which are social, political, psychological, religious, economic physiological energizes them to enroll in functional literacy programmes. Adults' interest in participating in adult literacy programme is strong due to their need for active participation in outdoor activities. Therefore, learning is directly related to their interests, as in this way they are able to learn better, especially when the subject is related to skill acquisition, because in this way they can be better trained, achieve a job that they aim to improve, on their financial gains. Regarding their expectations, it is found in older people, especially the expectation of fulfilling personal ambitions, probably because the specific part of the sample already has a job and tries to fulfill specific goals based on it. Nor can the fact of the disposition for socialization, which is observed mainly in the graduates of primary education, be omitted.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion, the following recommendations were made as follows;

1. That older adult learner should be motivated more so that illiteracy and ignorance will be out and thereby enhancing meaningful development.
2. Government should provide more adequate literacy centres that will faster functional adult literacy programmes that will accommodate the peculiarities of older adults.
3. Adequate awareness should be encouraged, especially in the rural areas so that older adult learners can participate effectively in functional literacy programmes.
4. The creation of more centres will help to ameliorate the scourge of poverty and help participates to be knowledgeable in how to make ends meet for development,
5. Working conditions should be provided for. In the sense that, the facilitators need to be encouraged in order to bring about meaningful development on the part of adult learners.

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