

Exploring Geragogy as A Non-Formal Education Approach to Promote Quality of Life for The Elderly

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Abstract

The ageing process often brings challenges in physical, psychological and social aspects that can affect the quality of life of the elderly. Non-formal education with a geragogy approach offers a significant solution to improve the quality of life of older people through learning. This article uses the literature review method to explore the concept, relevance, benefits and challenges in the application of geragogy to promote the quality of life of the elderly. The results show that the geragogy approach can reduce social isolation, improve cognitive capacity, and empower older adults socially and psychologically. However, geragogy implementation faces challenges such as financial barriers, age discrimination, and limited programme evaluation. This research highlights the importance of policy support and inclusive learning environments to maximise the positive impact of geragogy in improving the quality of life of older adults.

Keywords: Geragogy, Non-formal Education, Quality of Life, Elderly.

1. Introduction

Humans naturally go through the aging process. All the potential in adulthood begins to decline once entering the aging phase. The body becomes more vulnerable, skin wrinkles, hair turns white, intelligence declines, and often, people become forgetful (Nyandra, 2019). Individuals who have reached this stage are often referred to as the elderly or senior citizens.

Elderly individuals are those over 60 years old, typically marked by a decline in physical, psychological, and social aspects (Stuart-Hamilton, 2011). The elderly, with all their limitations, often spend their time resting, which leads to decreased activity levels and difficulty performing daily tasks, even basic activities such as walking or eating (Nyandra, 2019). Elderly individuals who cannot carry out activities independently are more likely to face other problems that can worsen their condition, such as declining mental health and a loss of life's meaning (Dian Eka Putri, 2021).

Education can serve as a means to help the elderly minimize the problems they face. Education has the potential to provide knowledge and skills that can enhance the quality of life for the elderly in various aspects. According to Law No. 20 of 2003, education is classified into two pathways: formal and nonformal education. Nonformal education provides opportunities to a wide segment of society in need of educational services, functioning as an addition, replacement, or complement to formal education (Kartika et al., 2021). Nonformal education is not limited by time or place and can be carried out by anyone, making it an ideal pathway for elderly learning.

One approach gaining attention as a potential solution is geragogy, which focuses on learning methods tailored to the unique characteristics and needs of the elderly (Findsen & Formosa, 2011). Geragogy refers to the teaching style or approach that helps elderly learners, who are generally no longer working, have families, and sometimes face physical and intellectual limitations (Findsen & Formosa, 2011). Geragogy is described as lifelong education by and for the elderly, based on social relationships, well-being, self-actualization, and talent development (Bulbul et al., 2022).

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Unlike andragogy or pedagogy, geragogy has the primary goal of maintaining independence through the resources and skills that elderly individuals possess. Geragogy requires providing meaningful tasks and offering longer periods to complete tasks, allowing time for reflection until they feel comfortable. Geragogy also emphasizes delivering content through methods and techniques that are more varied and flexible. The topics within the geragogy approach must remain clear in presenting limited ideas and avoid concepts that may be confusing. The approach must be supportive, encouraging, and inclusive. Past skills must be appreciated and reviewed to enable elderly individuals to be creative and adopt the best strategies for themselves (Bulbul et al., 2022).

According to research by Schirmer et al. (2023), elderly education programs must be adjusted flexibly. Social support is crucial for the success of implementing such programs. Other research by Hosnjak et al. (2020) shows that lifelong learning can enhance cognitive capacity and personal satisfaction for the elderly. Further research by Tambaum (2015) indicates that the principles of geragogy effectively support elderly learners in mixed-age groups and can improve their learning experiences. However, challenges such as fatigue levels and learning preferences must be optimized to increase their involvement and success in the educational process.

The application of geragogy in elderly education has not been fully explored, and related research and literature are often limited to theoretical concepts without sufficient practical development. Therefore, a comprehensive literature review is needed to explore the transformational potential of geragogy, identify successful implementations, and uncover challenges that need to be addressed in applying the geragogy concept. This research aims to explore the relevance, role, and challenges of geragogy as a nonformal educational approach to enhance the quality of life for the elderly.

2. Research Methods

This study uses literature review as its research method. A literature review is an activity of searching, reading, and listening to theories from research reports and literature sources that are relevant to the research being conducted (Surahman et al., 2016). The literature review was chosen because it allows the researcher to synthesize various similar and relevant literature to identify key findings, themes, and theories underlying the concept of geragogy as an approach to elderly learning.

Data were obtained through scientific databases such as Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Crossref. The search strategy was conducted using keywords: "geragogy", "elderly education", "nonformal education", and "quality of life for elderly". The criteria for the literature used in this study include:

- a. Articles published within the last 10 years (2015–2025).
- b. Articles published in indexed journals.
- c. Articles focusing on nonformal education, geragogy, or elderly learning.

The research process begins with searching based on the established keywords in scientific databases. The gathered articles are further selected through a filtering process by first reading the abstracts. Abstracts that do not meet the research objectives are excluded from the review. Then, the remaining articles are further selected by reading the full text to ensure their suitability for use. Key data in each article, such as the title, authors, year, methods, and research results, are grouped into a table for easier interpretation. Finally, the results of the interpretation are narrated systematically to highlight geragogy, its impact on elderly learning, and its implications for nonformal education. In summary, the research stages are illustrated as shown in Figure 1.

3. Results and Discussion

The researcher conducted a search for articles through Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Crossref. The article search was carried out until no additional relevant articles were found. A total of 35 articles were collected based on the search results. These articles were then analyzed to assess their relevance and quality according to the literature criteria for this study. Out of the 35 analyzed articles, only 12 articles met the criteria and were included in a table for grouping and interpretation. The grouped articles can be seen in Table 1.

**Figure 1.** Research Stages (in Indonesia)**Table 1.** Selected Literature Data

Title	Authors (Year)	Method	Results
Critical geragogy: A framework for facilitating older learners in community music	Andrea Creech & Susan Hallam (2015)	Qualitative	Community music facilitators for elderly learners successfully applied critical geragogy principles to enhance learning experiences. Thematic analysis of interviews with 13 facilitators revealed that they created supportive environments, valued participants' experiences, and encouraged collaboration. Key themes included the importance of progress, goal setting, and recognizing elderly learners' abilities to develop new skills. The study also highlighted that involvement in music-making contributed to improved well-being and agency among elderly groups, challenging the common myth that they cannot learn new things.
Geragogika subdyscyplina pedagogiczna	jako Elżbieta Kowalska Dubas (2020)	Mixed-method (Qualitative-Quantitative)	Geragogy is vital for supporting elderly education. It emphasizes a humanistic understanding of aging and supports individuals in experiencing aging positively. Lifelong learning improves elderly quality of life and helps address the challenges of aging. Geragogy connects with various educational and gerontological disciplines.
Critical educational gerontology at a senior center in Malta: possibilities and limitations for critical consciousness	Marvin Formosa & Roberta Galea (2020)	Action Research	The learning program increased personal empowerment among elderly participants. Learners became aware of social structural differences and injustices. However, the development of critical consciousness remained difficult due to various barriers. Participants

Title	Authors (Year)	Method	Results
Building evidence for the impact of older adult learning on active ageing: A quantitative study	Marvin Formosa (2021)	Quantitative	engaged in critical discussions about social class and age. The program fostered friendships and psychosocial support among learners. Participation in elderly learning programs enhances active aging. Elderly learning reduces issues like social isolation, cognitive decline, and age discrimination commonly faced later in life. Through participation in learning programs, elderly individuals can improve their life skills, maintain social networks, and develop a sense of belonging within the community. Elderly individuals can learn with equal opportunities, despite facing unique physical, cognitive, and psychological changes. Age-related changes affect the learning process and needs. Online learning requires an environment tailored for the elderly. Familiar technology enhances learning for elderly learners. Elderly people use ICT for information and entertainment. Mental health is critical for elderly well-being. Active aging enhances health and participation among the elderly.
Embracing Older Adults in Online Learning	Ali Haydar Bulbul, Serpil Gunaydin, Hatice Ferhan Odabaşı (2022)	Qualitative	Elderly individuals participate in education to stay active. Socializing is the primary motivation for educational participation. Participation is influenced by family and friends' involvement. Health benefits are a key reason for engaging in education. Educational motivations include addressing needs and expression. The most common reasons are participating in activities and meeting new people.
Inclusion in education later in life: Why older adults engage in education activities	Cecilia Bjursell (2019)	Mixed (Qualitative-Quantitative)	Participation in learning activities benefits elderly well-being. Elderly individuals reported an increase in their knowledge and skills. The study highlights the importance of elderly participation in nonformal learning activities. The fellowship formed within study groups is a key motivation and result of participating in nonformal learning.
Non-Formal Learning and Well-Being among Older Adults: Links between Participation in Swedish Study Circles, Feelings of Well-Being and Social Aspects of Learning	Pelle Aberg (2016)	Mixed (Qualitative-Quantitative)	Digital skills programs for elderly lack explicit geragogical application. Negative perceptions of aging affect digital skills learning. The learning environment influences elderly adoption of technology. Technology is valued in enhancing digital skills for the elderly.
What role does geragogy play in the delivery of digital skills programs for middle and older age adults? A systematic narrative review	Jessica R. Gates & Gemma Wilson-Menzfeld (2020)	Mixed (Qualitative-Quantitative)	Lifelong learning enhances cognitive capacity and prevents dementia. It fosters a sense of belonging and personal satisfaction. Major barriers include financial constraints and physical illnesses. Lifelong learning improves health regardless of early education. Strengths of lifelong learning significantly outweigh weaknesses and threats. Educated, active elderly individuals use fewer community resources.
Development strategies in the field of lifelong learning of older adults	Hosnjak Am, Ilic B, Kurtovic B, Ledinski Ficko S, Smrekar M (2020)	Qualitative	

Title	Authors (Year)	Method	Results
The right to lifelong learning: Addressing policy challenges for late-life learning in Canada	Satya Brink (2023)	Qualitative	Most geragogy principles were applied in the study process. Older learners face challenges in mixed-age groups. In-person training material is applicable to older learners' lives. Equal treatment is maintained between older and younger learners. No examples of stereotypes or discrimination occurred during training. Older learners do not expect special attention or support. Self-help techniques should be presented separately for better use. Observations and interviews provided insights into older learners' needs.
Educational concepts of digital competence development for older adult: A scoping review	Marielle Schirmer, Katharina Dalko, Dietrich Stoevesandt, Denny Paulicke, Patrick Jahn (2023)	Scoping Review	Educational programs must adapt to the specific needs of the elderly. Social support is crucial for successful implementation. Digital competence is essential for lifelong learning. There is a lack of systematic evaluation in existing programs. Inclusive access requirements are needed for educational services.

The literature review results from 12 articles obtained in Table 1 show that, on average, geragogy as a nonformal educational approach has significant relevance in supporting the improvement of elderly quality.

3.1. Principles of Geragogy as a Nonformal Education Approach

Geragogy, as a sub-discipline in nonformal education, provides space and opportunities for the elderly to continue developing their potential despite the challenges of old age. A study by Creech & Hallam (2015) describes how critical geragogy principles have significantly improved the learning experience for the elderly. These principles include recognizing, respecting, and involving the life experiences of the elderly and creating a collaborative learning process. Therefore, the application of geragogy principles not only promotes lifelong learning but also strengthens the social and psychological relationships of the elderly, providing them with a deep sense of meaning and purpose.

Further literature from Kowalska-Dubas (2020) also emphasizes that the geragogy approach should be based on a humanistic understanding of aging, viewing it as an opportunity for continued growth rather than the end of productivity. Lifelong learning, in essence, becomes an essential tool for improving the quality of life for the elderly. Additionally, through the educational process, elderly individuals gain hope in facing the challenges of aging.

In applying geragogy principles, the motivation of the elderly plays a crucial role in supporting the success of programs. Research by Bjursell (2019) highlights that elderly individuals are motivated to engage in learning to remain socially active, expand their social networks, and maintain mental health. The involvement of family and peers also plays an essential role in encouraging the elderly to engage in learning activities. Other motivations are influenced by the desire to contribute to the community, cope with life changes, express oneself, and seek deeper understanding, all of which can be fulfilled through educational programs.

3.2. The Role of Geragogy in Improving the Quality of Life for the Elderly

Various studies have highlighted the significant benefits of geragogy in supporting the well-being of the elderly. Findings by Formosa (2021) show that elderly participation in learning can help reduce social isolation, maintain cognitive function, and combat age discrimination. This aligns with findings by Hosnjak et al. (2020), who state that lifelong learning offers cognitive benefits and can prevent dementia. Åberg (2016) also found that group learning activities create a sense of community and strengthen social networks, which are essential for psychological well-being. This is highly relevant as elderly individuals often face social isolation, and activities like these help them stay connected to the community and feel valued.

The increasing challenges of the digital age create an opportunity to establish learning spaces for the elderly, allowing them to feel accepted, valued, and to build meaningful relationships with others. Through strong social connections,

elderly individuals can feel more confident and motivated to continue developing. Gates & Wilson-Menzfeld (2022) show that digital skills education provides significant opportunities for the elderly to adapt to technological advancements. However, the adaptation process still requires attention to the physical and cognitive limitations of the elderly. As also explained by Bulbul et al. (2022), elderly individuals who can utilize technology report increased confidence and social connections, which positively affects their perception of aging.

3.3. Challenges in Applying the Geragogy Concept

Despite the numerous benefits of the geragogy concept, its application still faces several challenges. Formosa & Galea (2020) identified barriers to the application of geragogy, such as the difficulty in developing critical awareness among the elderly due to internalized ageism (discrimination against themselves) and their preoccupation with what is immediately in front of them, making it hard for them to consider or think about other matters. Hosnjak et al. (2020) also showed that financial and health issues are often major barriers for the elderly to participate in education.

Another finding from Schirmer et al. (2023) adds that existing educational programs often lack systematic evaluations in their implementation. Rigid learning environments that do not consider the needs of the elderly also pose obstacles, making them feel overwhelmed and limiting their involvement in the learning process. Furthermore, this study highlights other barriers that elderly individuals face, which can be categorized into internal and external barriers. Internal barriers include a lack of self-confidence influenced by previous negative experiences, physical limitations such as vision problems and decreased dexterity, and reluctance to engage with digital technology. External barriers include age discrimination, which affects the elderly's self-perception, resulting in reduced self-confidence and social isolation.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study highlights geragogy as a relevant nonformal education approach that supports the improvement of the elderly's quality of life, making it more meaningful and fulfilling. With principles that honor life experiences, actively engage the elderly, and create a collaborative learning process, geragogy contributes to helping the elderly stay connected, feel valued, and develop their potential amidst the challenges of aging. The geragogy approach not only helps the elderly enhance their skills but also strengthens their social and emotional well-being. Furthermore, the motivation of the elderly to engage in learning is primarily driven by the desire to remain socially active, maintain mental health, and contribute to society, all of which play a significant role in the successful implementation of geragogy.

Despite many benefits, the application of geragogy also faces several challenges. Factors such as internal barriers (lack of self-confidence and physical limitations), external barriers (age discrimination and financial difficulties), and the lack of systematic evaluation in educational programs hinder elderly participation in learning. Therefore, strategic steps need to be taken in terms of elderly-friendly policies and support from various parties, particularly the government and society, to create a learning environment that provides tangible benefits for the elderly.

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