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Adults' Changing Roles as Challenged By Global Ageing in Modern Technological Era

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Abstract

The paper discusses the concept of ageing with focus on adult roles as challenged in modern technological era by the need to match changes with corresponding behaviours. Among social, cultural, and economic factors on which adult roles depend are gender roles, assertion of independence by adults from parents, marriage, child rearing, parenting older adults and related health issues, as well as adjustment to changing adult roles. The paper recommends the

development of appropriate skills in coping with challenges in the process of ageing; and that help should be sought on difficulties to ensure effective adjustment.

Introduction

Adults of today are facing a much more complex world than the adults in the past.

The adult stage from the developmental concept, and the ageing process is sometimes distinguished as comprising the Early Adulthood from about age 17 to 45, and Middle Adulthood, age 45 to 65. The adult stage seems to be the mid-point between the adolescence stage and the elder adulthood stage. The relevance of this stage in developmental psychology, is that, it is characterized by maturation, strong energy, and engagement in many activities as well as challenges.

Erikson (1960), in his "ages and stages" theory of human development, proposed eight stages of after birth, each of which involved a basic dichotomy representing best case and worst case outcomes. The corresponding age, and stage, from Erikson's perspectives with adulthood stage, will be (i) the young adulthood characterized by intimacy versus isolation, and (ii) adulthood, which is characterized by generativity versus self absorption. Fusing of identity with another leads to intimacy, while competitive relations with others leads to isolation. Establishing and guiding the next generation, leads to sense of generativity, while concern primarily with self leads to self-absorption.

There are also diverse roles that the adult is expected to play. These roles emerge in different situations, from different responsibilities, which change frequently, thus calling for preparedness, willingness, and creativity by the adult in confronting and adjusting to these roles.

Concept of Ageing

Bowen and Atwood (2004), referred to ageing as accumulation of changes in a person over time. Ageing is also an important part of all human societies, reflecting the biological changes that occur, but also reflecting cultural and societal conventions. Aubrey (2007). Barnes

(2012), defines 'ageing' as a 'natural phenomenon that refers to changes occurring throughout the life span and results in differences in structure and function between the youthful and the elderly'.

Barnes (2012) further highlighted some basic definitions related to ageing such as :

Gerontology: the study of ageing, including the science, psychology and sociology of ageing, **Geriatrics**: a field of medicine specializing in the health problems of advanced age. Other dimensions of ageing indicated are : social ageing, biological ageing, and cognitive ageing (Barnes, 2012).

Social ageing refers to the social habits and roles of individuals with respect to their culture and society, and as social ageing increases, individual usually experience a decrease in meaningful social interactions. Biological ageing refers to the physical changes in the body systems during the later decades of life which may begin long before the individual reaches chronological age 65. Cognitive ageing refers to decreasing ability to assimilate new information and learn new behaviors and skills (Barnes 2012).

Stuart-Hamton (2006), noted that age is measured chronologically and a person's birthday is often an important event. Although the measure of age in whole years since the day of birth is common, the measure of age has also historically varied from this approach in some cultures. In parts of Tibet, age is counted from conception, that is. one is usually 9 months old when one is born (Maddison 2006).

The Changing Role Of An Adults In The Developmental Process

We live in the times of great change; situations are changing and the adult has to match the various changes with corresponding behavior. With respect to ageing, each phase of ageing necessitate different roles. The roles of adults in the developmental processes are many and varied. The roles are also dependent on many factors some of which may be social, cultural, or economic to mention a few. The changing roles of adults will be discussed in the following areas :

- i) Gender roles
- ii) Assertion of independence by adult from parents