

Adulthood final

Life



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The distinction of the age range within each stage of development or within a single stage say childhood or adolescence varies from one community to another. These distinctions are not fixed and they vary greatly depending on the culture and the social orientation of the society doing the distinction.

For instance, the age at which an individual is seen as a juvenile varies from state to another and therefore it is automatic that the age at which one converts to an adult from adolescence will also vary. Therefore the distinction between childhood and adulthood will also vary between these states and generally vary from one cultural and social group to another all along history.

It is important to note that the passage year into adulthood or passage years within adulthood itself as a stage of development is socially and culturally fixed. All cultures divide the entire life of human beings into more or less the same but what differ are the transition ages from one stage to another or from one sub stage (within one development stage say adulthood) to another.

Of great importance are the roles that come with the attainment of each development stage (Barber, 1957).

These roles are assigned or expected in each society or culture differently and on the basis of the developmental changes observed at each stage. For instance, one will be expected to marry and raise a family at the entry into adulthood whereas other societies will prefer one to move on to the middle adulthood before he or she could marry.

This paper seeks to address the stages of adulthood giving a detailed description of the changes observed at each stage of adulthood and at the same time addressing how public policy affects each period of development and examine the different cultural influences during each developmental period.

2.0 Literature Review

Life development stages are often marked by certain specific social, physical and psychological developments or changes. When these changes are observed the assignment of rights, roles, privileges and responsibilities then takes place but this assignment is depended on the culturally defined or defined as a matter of official policy.

For instance, in Western industrialized societies, the life development stages are defined as Prenatal stage (conception- birth), Infancy (birth-2 years), Early childhood (3-6 years), Middle childhood (6 years- puberty which of course varies), Adolescence (beginning of puberty to adulthood), Young adulthood (20-40 years), Middle adulthood (40-65 years) and Later adulthood old age (sixty-five and older).

Of great concern especially for this paper are the stages of adulthood which as seen from above list is divided into 3 stages: Young adulthood (20-40 years), Middle adulthood (40-65 years) and Later adulthood/old age (65 years and older) (Pikunas& Eugene, 1991).

A young adult is lies between the age of 20-40 and individuals in this sub stage of adulthood display energy and vigor. They are generally of perfecthealthand bereft of problems related to senescence. Physical

performance reaches the peak at the age of 20-35 and starts to wane after 35, Strength peaks at 25 and remains constant through 35-40 after which it starts to decline and Flexibility decrease as the age goes past 35 or 40.

It is important to note physical differences in which a 40 year old may out beat a 20 year old on many of the aspects highlighted above. Women in this group reach their fertility peak which then decreases gradually as age progresses. For instance, there is 50%, 40% and 30% for women aged 19-26, 27-34 and 35-39 respectively (Lesser & Pope, 2007).

At this sub stage of adulthood, the members think in a more mature way as oppose to the preceding adolescence stage and focus more on the positive construction of a bright future ahead of them. Further, they learn to appreciate value in things and issues, tangible or intangible, and their relationships with adults improve markedly.

Middle adulthood, according to the US official policies , includes the ages 35-54 year olds but Erik Erikson deems otherwise and thinks that this stage end later and thus sets the stage to last from 40-65 years old. This stage succeeds young adulthood and it is defined by visible aging signs such as graying of hair and loss of skin elasticity, put up of body weight usually due to reduced physical activity and decrease in strength and flexibility.

Female fertility also decreases significantly during this stage of middle adulthood. However, the aging process observed in this stage varies from one individual to another mainly through the concept of individual differences (Shephard, 1998).

Finally, late adulthood or old age starts from 65 years and above. However this boundary between the middle adulthood and old age may not be categorically placed because it doesn't share the same connotations in all societies and therefore it varies from one society to another.

For instance, in most parts of the world, old age is assigned to people based on certain changes in their lives, activities and social roles i. e. people are said to be old when they assume or become grandparents, or when they retire.

European and North American societies identify old age with attainment of specific number of years. This apparently last stage of the human life cycle is distinct of limited regenerative ability with the members being highly prone to disease sickness and syndromes besides other aspects of senescence.

3.0 Statement of the Problem

The stages of adulthood development vary from one society or government to another. It is evident that the age definitions of these sub stages of adulthood differ from one official government policy to another and these governments fix these age numbers based on the societal assignments of roles.

The society on the other hand assigns roles, responsibilities, privileges etc basing on the public policy defined by the government. Therefore, it goes without saying that public policy affects each of the sub stages of adult development cultural orientation immensely influences each sub stage of developmental period.

4.0 Research Methods

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The method of collecting data is designed in a way that one randomly observes various people in various sub stages of adulthood noting the common physical, social and even psychological features where possible. Further, at least ten individuals in each sub stages of the adulthood stage i. e.

Early Adulthood, Middle Adulthood, Late Adulthood, Elderly are interviewed to state why they think they qualify to be in their respective sub stage of adulthood and what are some of the responsibilities, roles, rights etc that come with each sub stage of adulthood development. The research schedule was set a below:

4. 1 Early Adulthood

Observation: physical, psychological and social features

Interview: to state why they think they qualify to be in their respective sub stage of adulthood and the responsibilities, roles and rights that come with this sub stage

Time: 3 Hours

4. 2 Middle Adulthood

Observations: physical, psychological and social features

Interview: to state why they think they qualify to be in their respective sub stage of adulthood and the responsibilities, roles and rights that come with this sub stage

Time: 3 Hours

4. 3 Late Adulthood

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Observation: physical, psychological and social features

Interview: to state why they think they qualify to be in their respective sub stage of adulthood and the responsibilities, roles and rights that come with this sub stage

Time: 3 Hours

4. 4 Elderly

Observation: physical, psychological and social features

Interview: to state why they think they qualify to be in their respective sub stage of adulthood and the responsibilities, roles and rights that come with this sub stage