

Young Adults' Perception of Ageing and Care of Older Adults: A Study Among University of Ghana Students

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Abstract

Globally, the rate of population ageing is high. Similarly, Ghana faces a threat in witnessing rapid ageing of its population. Traditional social systems that were used to care for older adults are rapidly collapsing due to changes in the society. The present study explored young adults' students' perceptions of older adults in Ghana, through the exploration of their understanding of the term ageing and old age, their attitudes towards caring for older adults along with the roles they play in their care. Through a qualitative approach, individual interviews were conducted with 20 young adults in the University of Ghana. Findings show that students held stereotypes about older adults, but they were not aware of the ageing population and its implication on their wellbeing. The findings also revealed that young adults performed house chores and other minor activities to support older adults. Findings from this study suggest the need for information on ageing in tertiary schools to enhance students' knowledge on ageing and the implications of ageing population.

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Introduction

Ageing is inescapable for everyone and has become a global phenomenon. It is used to describe a series of time-related processes occurring in the individual that ultimately brings life to an end. Ageing influences an organism's entire physiology by impacting on all levels of functioning, and increases susceptibility to major chronic diseases (Eboiyehi, 2015; Vijg, 2007). Over the past decades, there has been a rapid acceleration in the ageing population both in developed and developing countries. According to a recent report by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (2017), the global population of those over 60 years has increased more than twofold since 1980 to 2017 from a population of 382 million to 962 million. The report added that the population of older adults is likely to double again in 2050 to a projected population of 2.1 billion. It is estimated that, the worldwide population of older adults from age 60 and above will continue increasing at a rate of 3.2% yearly (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013).

A report from the United Nations has revealed that in the coming decades, the number of older persons is expected to grow fastest in Africa, where it is predicted that the aged population will increase more than threefold between 2017 and 2050, from a population of 69 million to 226 million (United Nations, 2017). In addition, the population size of older adults is estimated to overtake the population of the youth between the ages of 10 to 24 globally (United Nations, 2017). Reports further indicate that in the next few years, it is likely that the ageing of the population will be accompanied by a rise in the number of people requiring care (Doblhammer & Vaupel, 2010). As is the case of developing countries in the world, Ghana is currently witnessing rapid ageing of its population (World Health Organization, 2014). The

population of older adults in Ghana has increased more than seven-fold from 213,477 in the 1960 census to 1,643,381 in the 2010 census (World Health Organization, 2014). The increase is due to declining fertility rates, decrease in global mortality and increasing life expectancy which Ghana is no exception (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013).

Young adults' perception of ageing

Regardless of the alarming increase in the ageing population, several research studies conducted on young adults' perception of ageing indicate that college students have low knowledge about aging and several misconceptions about older adults (Kimuna, Knox, & Zusman, 2005; Stuart-Hamilton & Mahoney, 2003; Tan, Hawkins, & Ryan, 2001). For instance, researchers have reported perceptions such as older adults being socially unskilled, senile, verbose, and rigid (Kimuna, Knox, & Zusman, 2005; Robinson & Anderson, 2006; Zhang, et al., 2006). Others label older adults as forgetful, useless, and financially distressed (Blakeborough, 2008). In a Nigerian study, Okoye and Obikeze (2005) found that majority of youth believed that older adults act like children and thus need more support from them. Robinson, Gustafson, and Popovich's (2008) study also revealed that young adults were aware of the stereotypes used to portray older people, understood how it offends older adults and its harmful consequences. Stereotypes and beliefs of younger people held about older adults contribute to denying them opportunities and equitable care (Minichiello, Browne, & Kendig, 2000). Despite the negative attitudes reported in some studies positive attitude have also been reported. Some young adults describe older adults as kind, supportive, wise, and having experience (Zhang et al., 2006).

Studies have observed that younger generations across Africa are expected to support older adults because of the traditional expectations of children serving as social insurance to their parents in old age (Arkorful, 2015; Oppong, 2006). This results from many older adults not having worked in the public sector which results in them not receiving any pension benefits. Oduro (2010) argues that at old age, children (young adults) and grandchildren of the older adults become their support. Most of the young adults who may be available to take care of older adults may be students. Students care for older adults by providing informal support to them. For example, students may help the aged by cooking, shopping, assisting them to with physical activities and providing psychological support to aid their survival in old age (Eboiyehi, 2015).

Although studies have been conducted on the attitude of college students towards ageing older adults, there is scant research on the subject among Ghanaian students. College students' attitude towards older adult is worth studying due to the changing phase of care provided to older adults in Ghana.

In the past, the family system relied on to care for older adults in the traditional African society. Every individual in the family and community is seen to have social responsibility for the other person. Similarly, caring for older adults was the concern of the family and community members (Eboiyehi, 2015). However, recent reports show that there is less contact between the youth and older adults. Furthermore, in the Ghanaian society wisdom is attributed to old age, as a result young adults seek guidance and counseling from older adults. Due to this perception of older adults being wise, they are assigned responsibilities such as family heads, officiating marriages, naming ceremonies, funerals and settling conflicts. However, recent report shows that respect is not given to older adults due to negative perception held

by the society (Frimpong, 2015), leaving them neglected. It is against these drawbacks that this study explores the perception of ageing of young adults who are pursuing their undergraduate education and how these perceptions influence the support they give to older adults in the Ghanaian context. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions: 1. What are the perceptions of young adults on the concept of ageing and old age? 2. What roles do young adults play in caring for older adults? 3. What are young adults' attitudes towards caring for older adults?

Method

Research design

The present study used an exploratory qualitative research design. This design enables the exploration of individual reasons and opinions about a subject. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants.

Participants

A sample of twenty (20) young adults undergraduate students in the University of Ghana were selected to serve as key informants for the study. Participants were selected through purposive and convenient sampling techniques which enabled the researchers to obtain participants who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to share their views on the topic of interest. Twenty (20) participants were deemed adequate given the aim to improve the exchange of information (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Out of twenty participants, ten were males and ten were females. Nine of the participants were freshmen of the university and the remaining eleven were continuing students. Their ages ranged

from 18 years to 26 years. Other demographic information is presented in Table one below.

Table 1 Demographics				
ID*	Level	Age	Gender	Religion
Pt.1	100	22	Male	Christian
Pt.2	100	18	Male	Christian
Pt.3	100	22	Male	Christian
Pt.4	100	20	Female	Christian
Pt.5	200	23	Male	Christian
Pt.6	200	23	Male	Christian
Pt.7	200	21	Female	Christian
Pt.8	200	21	Male	Christian
Pt.9	100	18	Male	Muslim
Pt.10	200	20	Female	Christian
Pt.11	300	21	Female	Christian
Pt.12	200	20	Female	Christian
Pt.13	100	18	Male	Christian
Pt.14	100	18	Female	Christian
Pt.15	400	23	Male	Christian
Pt.16	400	23	Female	Christian
Pt.17	400	26	Male	Christian
Pt.18	100	25	Female	Christian
Pt.19	100	19	Female	Christian
Pt.20	300	20	Female	Christian

Trustworthiness of the results

Shenton's (2004) suggestions for achieving the four criteria (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) of trustworthiness of the findings were followed. To achieve credibility, the researchers critically analyzed the data enhancing the quality of the analysis. To ensure transferability, detailed information on how the data was gathered has been provided. To achieve dependability, the researchers established grounds for replication of the study by clearly stating the step-by-step process in gathering and interpreting the data. To achieve confirmability, the data collected, and the interpretations made were not based on the researchers' own imagination. However, the researchers ensured that the data collection was without any personal biases. The data was collected with the aid of a recording device to ensure that the actual information received from the participants is presented.

Ethics and procedure

Ethical clearance was approved by the Departmental Research and Ethics Committee (DREC) of the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana. The participants were given appropriate information about the research, after which their consent was obtained. Participant's privacy was ensured by protecting the data collected from the participants and ensuring that only the researchers have access to the data. Also, the participants were made aware that they can withdraw their participation at any time in the research and that if for any reason they decide to withdraw from the study, the information they had given would be destroyed.

Following ethics approval, the author met with individuals who were willing to participate in the study. The time and venue for

the interview were scheduled to suit the participant's schedule. The interviews were conducted in empty lecture halls and residential rooms of participants who resided around campus. Informed consent was obtained from participants and a brief description of the research was given before the interviews began. The researchers used an interview guide purposely developed for the study to gather information from participants. Responses were recorded electronically and manually and used for transcriptions. Sample interview questions include: 1. In your opinion, what is ageing? 2. Who do you recognize to be an older person (aged) and why? 3. Can you describe what you know about the ageing population? The duration of the interviews ranged from 20 to 30 minutes.

Data analysis

Transcribed interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. In this research Braun and Clark (2006) six step framework which entails familiarisation with data gathered, generating initial code for analysis, searching for themes based on the initial codes, reviewing themes in addition to defining and naming of themes and report writing was used. The interview data collected in the field were transcribed verbatim, read through, coded line-by-line and categorized into themes in line with the research aims and objectives. The steps used in analysing the data collected are shown in Figure 1 below.

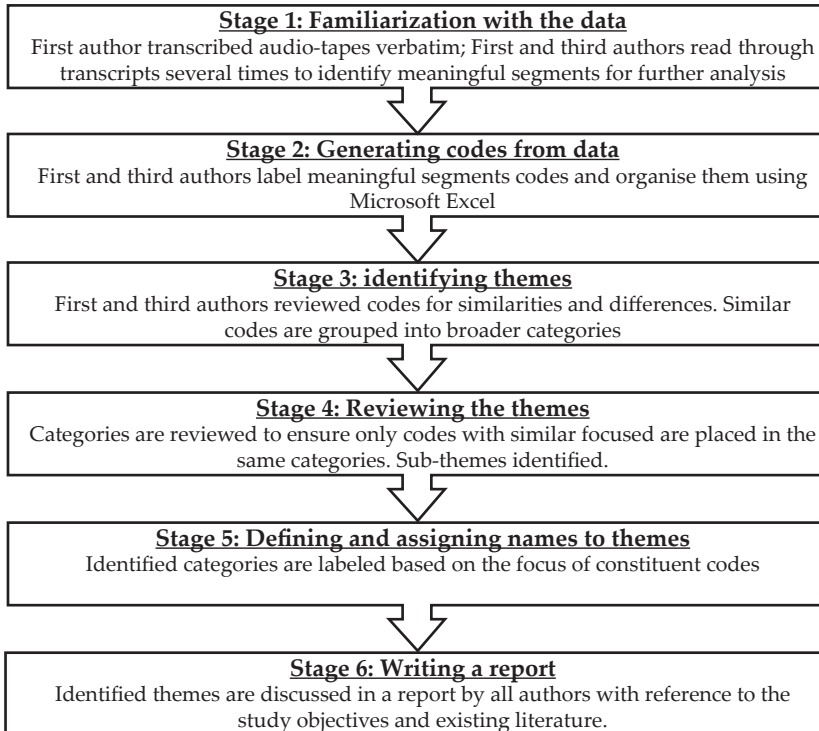


Fig 1: Flow chart representation of thematic analysis.

Results

Following the data analysis, three major themes were identified which included perceptions of ageing and older adulthood, attitudes towards older adults and attitudes towards caring for older adults.

Perceptions of ageing and older adulthood

This theme addresses students' general knowledge on ageing and older adulthood. First, the participants' understanding of

the concept of ageing was explored and second, their views on what constitutes older adulthood were explored. Ageing was perceived to relate to the number of years one has lived, that's the individual's chronological age, and a continuous process in which people transition from one stage of life to another.

"Ageing has to do with growing old in society. Especially the age from 60 above are considered most widely as the aged..." (Pt. 15, male, 23 years).

"when we talk of ageing, it is like a period that you move from one stage to another ... You grow by age, so ageing is the ranges. You step from one stage to another in life, that's it ..." (Pt. 8, male, 21 years).

The transitional nature of ageing was perceived to relate to physical strength possessed by the growing individual. In this sense, childhood and older adulthood were perceived to be the stages for weakness whereas early and middle adulthood were perceived to represent the stage of life where the individual is strongest.

"...When I was little, my dad used to say something about when you are growing. When they gave birth to you, you just start life from day one you came into the world you are climbing a mountain. But when you get to 50 you are descending the mountain. From that age 1 to 50, you are getting stronger and stronger but from 50 downwards you are getting weaker and weaker. Because the things they did it back then, now they can't do ..." (Pt. 1, male, 22 years)

"What I think about ageing is, basically it is a natural phenomenon that occurs as a result of living. Like the more you grow. When you are born, you are a kid [you know] so the moment you are growing that is what is meant by ageing." (Pt. 17, male, 26 years).

Second, participants' views on features of older adulthood were explored. In this regard, the number of years one lives was cited as a major criterion for identifying an older person. However, there were variations regarding the exact age to call a person an older adult. Most participants cited between 60 and 70 years as the cut-off age. While chronological age was important, the individual's level of independence, ability to perform their daily activities and work were closely linked with the chronological age. To these participants, once a person is unable to function without assistance, the individual assumes the older adult status. But those who can work despite being older than the 70 years cut-off age were not perceived to be considered as older adults.

"... From 70 years. Because I see many people who are 60 and some are stronger than even some in the government institutions who are still working though they are supposed to go on pension. Yes, that is why I think 70; those who are 70 are the aged." (Pt. 10, female, 20 years)

"...I will say from 70 and above because, I know people who are 60 and are still strong... I think when you get to your 70s that is when age catches up. Normally it depends, some of the aged despite them being old they still have the capacity to withstand any event around them..." (Pt. 17, male, 26 years).

For other students, the constitutional retirement age, which is 60 years, was cited as the cut-off for older adulthood irrespective of how functional the person is.

"...According to our laws, someone who is aged is above 60 that's the time for retirement... I will take it as 60. As is generally accepted..." (Pt. 3, male, 22 years)

...In Ghana, ... you are still relevant to the system till you are 60 years. You can work till 60 years but, it is assumed that after 60 years you need to go on retirement. Basically because of your

strength and the need for someone to also take up that place and learn from you... Someone above 60 is basically considered as an aged..." (Pt. 16, female, 23 years).

Third, participants were asked of their knowledge of the rate of ageing in the Ghanaian population. In response to this, some participants said they had no knowledge of the increase in the population of older adults in Ghana.

"Not really. I haven't taken time to look at it." (Pt. 14, female, 18 years)

Few participants indicated that although they were not aware of the specific rate of growth, they have noticed the presence of many older adults in several parts of their communities.

"...Yeah, because in our society today everywhere you go you will see the aged around." (Pt. 1, male, 22 years).

"... Because every house has an old man or woman ..." (Pt. 8, male, 21 years).

Other participants reported that population of the youth is more than that of older adults so to them, they do not see an aging population.

"...The youth are more than the aged because, per my study I think the youth are more.... Nowadays you will go to a company you will see someone 26 or 27 years managing the company..." (Pt. 3, male, 22 years).

... The last I checked, the long-time then [hmm] about 15 to 20 percent. [Ooh] the youth are more..." (Pt. 6, male, 23 years).

Attitudes towards older adults

This theme highlights students' attitudes towards older adults, which were positive and negative. Positive attitudes pertained to older adults being perceived as experienced and possessing higher reasoning abilities, over time they perceived such older adults will develop foresight which young adults lack. Due to the extensive knowledge, they possess, older adults were believed to deserve respect and should be consulted in critical decision.

"...They are people we have to look out for because they have the experience and the knowledge we don't have and give the necessary accord that is to be given to them. We should show respect to the aged..." (Pt. 7, female, 21 years).

"...Because of their experiences...they know that if you go this way, this is how it will turn up. Some also know that if you go that way this is how it will turn up... There are some decisions they will make, if you think about it, you will realize that they were right. Or sometimes you will not realize what they meant until you have experienced it, [okay]... Sometimes most of the things they say though they have reasons, and they have anticipation for them, they are not able to clarify what exactly they are talking about. Some they do things because of their experiences ..." (Pt. 15, male, 23 years).

Some students viewed older adulthood as a blessing. They responded that not everyone will live long to reach certain ages. As a result, when a person gets to that age, he or she is considered to have received God's blessing. Most students believe that 70 years is God's given age and to exceed it is a special blessing.

"...70 as the maximum but when you exceed it, it's grace. So, if God gave 70, that means that 70 is the maximum..." (Pt. 18, female, 25 years)

"...70 is when the Christians believe that God has blessed you, so the age after 70 is a bonus life ..." (Pt. 7, female, 21 years).

Nevertheless, not all students held favorable perception about older adults as some participants also expressed negative perceptions about them, which outweighs the positive ones. Participants refer to older adults as feeble, babies, lonely, and socially awkward individuals who need constant assistance to function.

"...The aged people are like babies. They see things differently because their minds are a bit not there...they are feeble at that moment so they need people who will be around, like show them how far they have come. Because being an aged person is not that easy it comes with a lot of challenges. It's like their peers some are gone, and they are the only ones and now how they relate to people are a problem..." (Pt. 3, male, 22 years).

"Growing old comes with difficulties. Sometimes the way ... they move and the way they do things becomes slow in a way. Sometimes they get tired while walking..." (Pt. 15, male, 23 years).

Similarly, students also perceived older adults as authoritative, selfish, and manipulative individuals who like to impose their feelings and experiences on others. They also reported that older adults can be difficult to understand and manage as they prefer to do what they want for themselves without taking other people's perspective into consideration.

"...They are authoritative because that is what they enjoy doing ok. That is what they love, that is what they cherish, they like to bully people. ... They just like to control people. So, if they don't get anybody to control around them, they will call people to come for them to control. Some just like to control. Others too would

want to worry people because they feel when they worry others that is what also makes them happy.” (Pt. 15, male, 23 years).

“...Maybe you are used to sleeping around ... 8–9 [pm] and they are used to sleeping 6 or sometimes 5:30[pm]. They close all the doors and lock all the things up. Another thing could be, you are used to listening to radio or watching the TV with an average volume, but they want it as low, below average and you don’t understand them. Another experience is, sometimes when you live with them, they tell you things to do and things you shouldn’t do, you wouldn’t understand ...” (Pt. 4, female, 20 years)

Furthermore, participants also reported that older adults tend to forget too quickly and frequently.

“... Let’s say like they want to take something from the room. They will go into the room ... and forget what they want. It does happen to everybody, But the degree at which it happens to them is more.” (Pt. 14, female, 18 years)

“... Because of their old age they forget, and they keep calling you ...their memory is fading faster as compared to yours...” (Pt. 3, male, 22 years).

Some students reported that the older adulthood comes with many regrets. Regrets could emanate from their inability to accomplish certain goals or being unable to perform certain tasks they used to be able to perform in their youthful stage.

“...Sometimes they compared their youthful life to their old age. ... that person will be like ... I wish I’m still young, I could have done this on my own. I could have gone that way. I could have done that. I could have done this. Meanwhile they don’t have the strength. So, they feel that sometimes they are victimized, because they don’t have the capabilities they used to.” (Pt. 15, male, 23 years)

"...You know some people still feel regret. Regret can also be a challenge because they regret not doing something in their youthful age to make them better or to inspire people or to change life. They might regret..." (Pt. 18, female, 25 years).

Participants' attitudes also reflected in how they relate with older adults. During the time they spent with older adults, the participants described older adults as complicated and difficult to understand due to the generational gap. This complexity makes it difficult for them to reach consensus on issues.

"... We are from different generation, so they find it hard to understand how things work now... sometimes you have somewhere important to go and maybe you are only left with your grandma at home. You don't know her whereabouts so maybe you have to compromise. You need to stay at home and watch her." (Pt. 6, male, 23 years)

"... Sometimes ...when she has eaten and you ask her, "has she eaten?" She will tell you, "no." When someone comes around and asks her, if she has eaten, she will tell them, no. I know of one [older adult], she speaks a lot like, when you come to pass her compound, she will sack you to go back. They behave awkwardly, like sometimes she will sit down, and she will be talking by herself." (Pt. 11, female, 21 years).

Some participants referred to older adults as illiterate and saw the need to educate them. Some also pointed to difference in technology and the older adults' gap in knowledge on this.

"... You can also help them because most of them aren't learned, they weren't able to go to school so you are knowing certain things, you can put them through because the world is evolving and its becoming technology, technology everywhere. So, you have to make them understand and make them flow with the

world by teaching and explaining some things to them..." (Pt. 1, male, 22 years).

Attitude towards caring for older adults

Given the negative perceptions participants had about older adults, we were also interested in whether they were willing to aid older adults and their reasons for helping, and the nature of support they offer to them. Most students expressed their willingness to help older adults indicating that it is a blessing and a privilege. Some felt the need to help to gain similar assistance when they also become old themselves and need the assistance of other people:

"I will continue helping them. ... it is a blessing. I don't do it because we are supposed to do it. I do it because of the implication and because I know it will help me. Because I like helping people. ..." (Pt. 2, male, 18 years)

"... I think I will also grow and be of that age. If I don't do it now maybe someone might not even do it for me. Sometimes what you do that's what is reciprocated to you." (Pt. 11, female, 21 years)

For other participants, their willingness was conditional on whether it will inconvenience them especially when they perceive their actions will affect their daily activities and when they perceive the older adult needs help.

"...They are willing to only if it is convenient for them. ... Maybe, during the festive seasons most people go to their villages to live with the aged, [and] speak with them." (Pt. 6, male, 23 years)

Some students also reported that the distance between the youth and older adults limit how much assistance they can offer them. They admitted that because many older adults live in the rural

areas, it is difficult for the young adults to travel down to assist the older adults.

"...I will say urbanization because, everyone wants to come to the urban areas and ...big percent of these aged do not feel like coming to the urban areas. Because for instance, in my grandmother's case, my mother [said] she should come here and she [responded that] she has a farm there and she can't leave it." (Pt. 1, male, 22 years).

"Not really. Like now nobody [students] wants to stay in the village." (Pt. 11, female, 21 years)

Essentially, it emerged that religious teachings and childhood upbringing motivate some students to help older adults. The uncertainty about future happenings causes fear in some students to care for older adults knowing that in future they will not be deserted. Participants said the charity work of their religious groups and church leaders built their interest in the welfare of older adults.

"...In the bible, it is also stated that we should honour our father and mother so that thy days will be long on earth. That is the only command that goes with a promise. So, from the look of things anybody that is older than you that you can call mother or father you should respect and obey the person..." (Pt. 1, male, 22 years).

"There is this man of God who ... gives medical help to the aged. He always has them at heart. If they need financial assistance, he gives it to them, health he gives to them and spiritually, he supports them. My religion has made me know that when I'm a responsible person in the society I can also do the same thing. Because of the man of God, what he is doing in his church." (Pt. 7, female, 21 years).

Discussion

This study explored the views of 20 young adults of University of Ghana about ageing, their attitudes towards older adults and their care. Three major themes emerged from the data: perceptions of ageing and older adulthood, attitudes towards older adults and attitudes towards caring for older adults. Findings of the study suggest that the description and understanding of aging and older adulthood differ from person to person. Majority of the students view ageing as part of human life and older adults as blessed by God which may be attributed to the experiential knowledge they have as some participants have relatives who are older adults (Eboiyehi, 2015). Participants had different criteria for judging who qualifies as an older adult. They indicated that an individual must be 60 or 70 years to be identified as an older person. Some students referred to ageing as a cycle, where older adults are at the end of the cycle. Owing to this belief, they perceive that older adults are bound to face many challenges at that stage of their life. Our study also revealed that students do not have enough knowledge of older adults. This finding supports evidence in previous research by Okoye and Obikeze (2005) in Nigeria that shows that younger adults are not informed on the aging population and how it affects the life of everyone. Most of the students in our study were also not aware of the presence of older adults in their community. They place no relevance on knowing something about older adulthood and older persons.

Similarly, the participants believed that older adults have physical limitations. This supports the wear and tear theory, which explains that the human body begins to deteriorate at certain ages (Lange & Grossman, 2010). Mosher-Ashley and Ball (1999) also found similar results in their study, that students perceived older people to have physical problems. The findings

also support the use of labelling and negative stereotypes to refer to older adults. This includes selfish, authoritative, manipulative, forgetful, feeble, and regretful. Dosu (2014) suggests that older adults engage in societal upbringing of the youth in a typical Ghanaian society and as a result these perceptions may influence the students' attitudes towards older persons.

Participants perceived older adults to be experienced, having foresight and high reasoning capabilities. Students who have parents or close relatives who are older adults gave positive perception about such individuals. This finding is in line with findings by Kimuna, Knox, and Zusman (2005) in United States, which shows that students' perception can be influenced if they live with an older person. This finding further suggests that to improve younger adults' perceptions and attitudes of older adults, there is the need to provide younger adults with experiences of living with older adults.

Eboiyehi's (2015) study on how the perception of old age have implication for care and support for older adults revealed that factors such as migration, unemployment, westernization, and industrialization were the underlining influences of care given to older adults. Similarly, in the current study students indicated that older persons are in the villages and the youth come to the cities to further their education and get employed in the city and forget about them in the villages. On the other hand, according to the students, older adults see the village as their comfort zone and always want to live there irrespective of how enjoyable others describe living in the cities to be.

It was also evident in our study that students perceived older adults to be rigid and unable to accept or adapt to change (Lange & Grossman, 2010). This is reflected in participants' report of older adults' inability to adapt to technology. Furthermore,

participants also indicated that technology has affected the way students relate with older adults. In that the nature of support offered by students to older adults cannot be done with technology, but demands their presence (Oppong, 2006). Due to this, students are unable to effectively support older adults as they are unable to provide physical support due to differences in schedule and their personal concerns. Students further indicated that caring for older adults is complicated, in that it becomes difficult to reach an agreement on issues due to the generational gap. Keeping up with the psychological changes they go through becomes frustrating to young adults. Previous research reported that young adults describe their relationship with older adults as difficult, frustrating, repetitive, and slow (Van Dussen & Weaver, 2009).

Despite these negative stereotypes students have about older adults, they were willing to provide care for older adults because they felt that helping older adults secures their future to receive God's blessing. Also, the work of religious leaders and training received in childhood motivates some students to care for older adults. This is in line with study by Malik and colleagues (2016) in Pakistan where the people believed strongly that they will be rewarded and given something good later life or after death, when they perform good deeds. Participants indicated that caring for older adults involves showing good qualities, performing house chores, cooking, and running errands as well as providing material and psychological support to ensure their survival in older adulthood (Eke, 2003). In addition, participants indicated that younger adults need to offer support to older adults because older adults depend on their children when they are no longer capable of productive activity and when they begin to suffer from illnesses that limit their movement and ability to conduct tasks which is essential for daily survival (Oppong, 2006).

Recommendations for intervention

One of the key findings of the present study is the lack of knowledge about ageing and older adulthood. This finding highlights the importance of implementing measures to create awareness about older adulthood among young adults. This recommendation can be implemented by incorporating topics on ageing and older adulthood in educational curricular. Younger adults would also benefit from the opportunity to interact with older adults. This will provide younger adults with experiential knowledge of the lives of older adulthood, including their strengths and weaknesses, which may help to change the negative stereotypes that younger adults hold about older adults. It is also recommended that studies about the aged (gerontology programs) need to be encouraged in tertiary education. Through education students' perception and attitudes of the aged can be influenced. This will help drive ageing related research to inform public policies and pressure groups decisions.

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

The main limitation of the study pertains to the use of smaller sample as only the views of twenty young adults were reported for the study. This limited the diversity of view obtained in the study. Future study should consider employing a large and representative sample of young Ghanaian adults to ascertain a representative view that could be used to inform policy making. A larger representative sample will also make room for generalization of the findings.

Conclusion

This study observed that students do not have adequate knowledge about ageing and older adulthood as their knowledge

base is focused on young adulthood. The study also revealed that the students have negative stereotypes about older adulthood which negatively impact on their attitude towards their care.

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