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EDUCATION OF OLDER ADULTS FROM AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: THE ROLE OF GENDER IN SHAPING MOTIVATIONAL NEEDS

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In the context of global demographic changes, marked by the accelerated aging of the population, senior education has gained increased relevance within contemporary educational and social policies. This article examines senior education from an intercultural perspective, highlighting the role of gender in shaping motivational needs for participation in formal and non-formal educational activities. The theoretical framework is grounded in the lifelong learning paradigm, promoted by UNESCO and the United Nations, and informed by relevant contributions from intercultural education and gender studies. The results indicate the predominance of intrinsic motivation in the learning process in later life, with seniors primarily driven by the desire for self-realization, personal development, and maintenance of intellectual activity. Furthermore, gender differences in motivational orientation are highlighted, correlating with life experiences and social trajectories. In conclusion, the article emphasizes the need for educational programs sensitive to gender and intercultural diversity, supporting active participation and social cohesion.

Keywords: *education of older adults, intercultural approach, gender differences, lifelong learning, motivational needs, seniors.*

EDUCAȚIA SENIORILOR DIN PERSPECTIVĂ INTERCULTURALĂ: ROLUL GENULUI ÎN CONFIGURAREA TREBUINȚELOR MOTIVAȚIONALE

În contextul transformărilor demografice globale, marcate de îmbătrânirea accelerată a populației, educația seniorilor a dobândit o relevanță sporită în cadrul politicilor educaționale și sociale contemporane. Articolul explorează educația seniorilor din perspectivă interculturală, evidențiind rolul genului în configurarea trebuințelor motivaționale pentru participarea la activități educaționale formale și nonformale. Demersul teoretic se fundamentează pe paradigma învățării pe tot parcursul vieții, promovată de UNESCO și ONU, precum și pe contribuții relevante din domeniul educației interculturale și al studiilor de gen. Rezultatele indică predominanța motivației intrinseci în procesul de învățare la vârsta a treia, seniorii fiind stimulați în principal de dorința de autorealizare, dezvoltare personală și menținere a activității intelectuale. Totodată, sunt evidențiate diferențe de gen în orientarea motivațională, corelate cu experiențele de viață și traiectoriile sociale. În concluzie, articolul subliniază necesitatea elaborării unor programe educaționale sensibile la dimensiunea de gen și la diversitatea interculturală, care să sprijine participarea activă și coeziunea socială.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educația seniorilor, abordare interculturală, diferențe de gen, învățare pe tot parcursul vieții, trebuințe motivaționale, seniori.*

Introduction

In the context of ongoing global demographic change and the accelerated ageing of populations, the education of older adults has increasingly become a relevant concern for educational, social, and cultural policy agendas. As the proportion of individuals in later life continues to grow, the traditional understanding of education - largely centred on professional preparation - requires reconsideration. In later adulthood, education is increasingly linked to broader objectives such as active participation in society, social inclusion, and the sustained quality of life.

Within this framework, education for older adults is widely acknowledged as an integral component of the lifelong learning paradigm promoted by UNESCO and the United Nations. At the same time, it is gradually consolidating its status as a distinct area within adult education, one that requires pedagogical approaches responsive to learners' accumulated life experience, evolving motivations, and heterogeneous life trajectories.

The growing relevance of this field is also connected to the need to approach older adult education from an intercultural perspective, particularly in contexts characterised by mobility, migration, and cultural diversity. Research suggests that educational processes in adulthood are closely linked to the cultural environments in which values, attitudes, and perceptions of learning are formed [1]. From this standpoint, interculturality allows for a move beyond standardised educational models toward more context-sensitive interpretations of learning in later life.

Such an approach necessarily extends beyond ethnic or linguistic categories, incorporating additional dimensions such as gender, social positioning, professional background, and culturally internalised patterns of behaviour accumulated across the life course. Consequently, education in later adulthood can be understood as a multidimensional field shaped by intersecting social and identity-related factors.

Within this theoretical framework, a relatively underexplored aspect concerns the influence of gender on the motivational structure of older adults in intercultural learning contexts. Rather than being treated as a purely demographic variable, gender should be understood as a socio-cultural construct that shapes educational pathways, occupational histories, social roles, and coping strategies across the lifespan [3].

In later life, these gendered patterns often become more visible, reflecting accumulated structural inequalities, culturally embedded expectations, and differentiated access to educational opportunities. From a motivational perspective, older adults tend to prioritise needs related to self-actualisation, belonging, recognition, social usefulness, and autonomy. However, the way these needs are ranked and expressed is significantly influenced by both gender and cultural context. Overlooking this dimension may result in educational programmes - formal or non-formal - that are only partially aligned with learners' realities, thereby limiting meaningful participation and engagement.

Against this background, the present article aims to examine senior education from an intercultural perspective, with particular attention to the role of gender in shaping motivational needs. It seeks to develop an interpretative framework of learning motivation in later adulthood that may inform more inclusive, equitable, and context-sensitive educational policies and practices.

Successful Ageing - Theoretical Approaches

Successful ageing is a complex and multidimensional concept for which the specialised literature does not yet offer a single, universally accepted definition. Researchers who have explored this topic tend to emphasise different, though often complementary, dimensions of the ageing experience.

One of the early conceptualisations is offered by Havighurst (1961), who associates *successful ageing* with the individual's capacity to "add life to years", highlighting the importance of life satisfaction and sustained engagement in meaningful activities [9, p. 11]. This perspective suggests that quality of life should not be understood as secondary to longevity, but rather as its defining dimension. In later adulthood, living longer has limited value if it is not accompanied by subjective experiences of satisfaction, meaning, and psychological balance. This anticipates contemporary approaches that place increasing emphasis on subjective well-being as a core indicator of successful ageing.

Within a different conceptual tradition, Ryff (1989) defines successful ageing as "a form of positive or ideal functioning, linked to the achievement of developmental tasks across the life course" [19, p. 1073]. While Havighurst's interpretation is more closely related to life satisfaction and emotional fulfilment, Ryff's model introduces a more structured psychological perspective on well-being. In this view, ageing successfully is not only about feeling satisfied with life, but also about maintaining autonomy, having a sense of purpose, and preserving meaningful interpersonal relationships. This shift is important because it moves the discussion from a purely subjective evaluation of happiness toward a more multidimensional understanding of human functioning in later life.

Fisher (1992), based on qualitative interviews with older adults, provides empirical insight into how successful ageing is actually experienced and described by seniors themselves [7, p. 174]. His findings indicate that older adults tend to define successful ageing less in abstract theoretical terms and more through everyday strategies of coping and adaptation. In this sense, concepts such as "*adjustment*" or "*adaptation*" are not merely technical terms in gerontology, but reflect a lived reality in which individuals continuously negotiate biological changes, psychological transitions, and social repositioning. From this perspective, successful ageing is better understood as a dynamic process rather than a fixed outcome, since it depends on how individuals

integrate change into their daily lives while maintaining a sense of continuity and personal coherence.

Building on these perspectives, Gibson (1995) attempts to integrate subjective and objective dimensions of ageing, defining successful ageing as “the attainment of personal potential and a satisfactory level of physical, social, and psychological well-being in later life, both from the perspective of the individual and others” [8, p. 284]. A similarly integrative view is proposed by Palmore (1995), who conceptualises successful ageing through three core components: *survival* (longevity), *health* (absence of disability), and *life satisfaction* (happiness) [14, p. 914].

A widely cited model in the literature is proposed by Rowe and Kahn (1998), who conceptualise successful ageing through three interrelated components:

- The first refers to the *maintenance of good health*, understood as a reduced risk of disease and disability, which is typically supported by lifestyle factors such as regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and periodic medical monitoring.
- The second component concerns sustained *physical and cognitive functioning*, reflected in the ability to remain intellectually active and mentally engaged across later life.
- The third dimension emphasises *active engagement in life*, which is largely expressed through the maintenance of meaningful social relationships.

Beyond this tripartite model, Rowe and Kahn also highlight the central role of social support in shaping ageing outcomes. Their argument is based on the observation that social isolation constitutes a significant risk factor for health decline, particularly in later adulthood.

In contrast, different forms of support-emotional, practical, and relational - contribute positively to overall well-being and quality of life. More importantly, social support functions not only as a protective factor in itself, but also as a buffer that can mitigate some of the negative consequences associated with ageing, including increased vulnerability to everyday stressors [17, p. 133]. From this perspective, successful ageing is not only a matter of individual health behaviours, but also of the broader relational and social context in which older adults are embedded.

Although Rowe and Kahn’s model has significantly influenced contemporary gerontological discourse, it has also been criticised for its limited sensitivity to cultural diversity and gendered experiences of ageing. Several scholars argue that its emphasis on physical health, functional performance, and autonomy largely reflects individualistic Western values, which may not adequately capture the realities of older adults in other cultural contexts or those facing structural constraints.

Moreover, empirical studies indicate that men and women experience ageing differently, as a result of distinct educational, occupational, and family trajectories. This suggests the need for a more explicitly gender-sensitive interpretation of successful ageing.

In later developments, Rowe and Kahn’s model (1998) was expanded to include positive spirituality as an additional dimension capable of enriching the ageing experience (Fig. 1). Spirituality contributes to psychological and emotional balance, facilitates adaptation to losses and limitations associated with later life, and strengthens a sense of meaning and existential coherence.

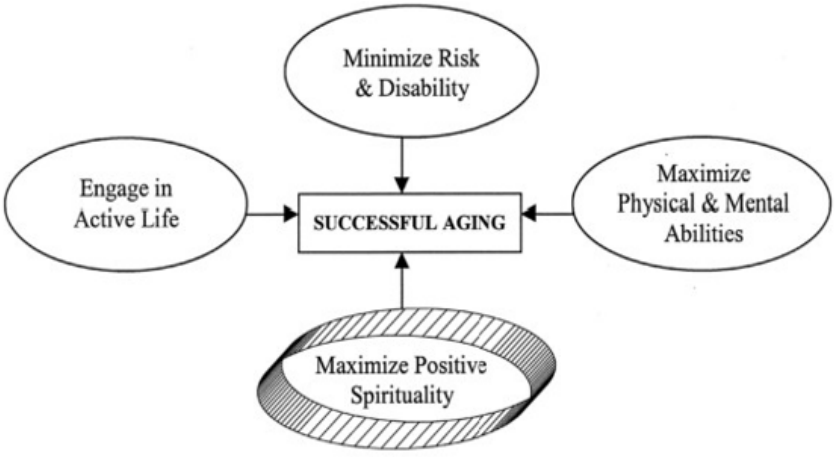


Fig. 1. Revised Rowe and Kahn Model of Succesful Aging [4, pp. 615]

Through spiritual practices and value-based reflection, older adults may maintain an active relationship with both self and others, thereby supporting cognitive functioning as well as sustained social engagement [4, p. 615].

Along the same lines, Vaillant G. E., & Mukamal, K. report that the two most important psychosocial predictors of successful aging are a high level of education (which likely reflects, equally, traits such as self-care and planning capacity, not just social status) and the existence of an extensive family network. In his research on aging, Vaillant G. E., (2001) identified the following variables as contributing to successful aging:

- seeking and maintaining interpersonal relationships and recognizing that relationships that help us heal and grow require gratitude, forgiveness, and intimacy;
- concern for others and the capacity to give of oneself;
- a sense of humor and the ability to laugh and play well into old age;
- forming new friendships as old ones are lost, which has a more positive impact on successful aging than post-retirement income;
- the desire to learn and openness to new ideas and perspectives;
- understanding and accepting one's own limitations, as well as accepting help from others;
- understanding the past and its influence on our lives while remaining anchored in the present;
- focusing on positive aspects and valuable people in our lives, rather than on negative events that may occur [21, pp. 841].

Vaillant's findings indirectly draw attention to the role of education and lifelong learning as protective factors for successful ageing. The willingness to learn, openness to new ideas, and the capacity for identity reconstruction are not only individual characteristics, but are also shaped by broader cultural frameworks as well as by gender norms internalised throughout the life course.

From this perspective, later-life learning cannot be understood in a uniform way, since women and men may engage differently in educational processes depending on socially constructed roles and the nature of educational opportunities accumulated over time. These differences are not merely individual preferences, but reflect long-standing structural and cultural influences.

Although conceptual definitions of successful ageing vary in emphasis and terminology, most approaches converge on a shared understanding: ageing successfully involves a continuous balancing process between physical health, psychological well-being, social participation, adaptive capacity, and existential meaning. What becomes particularly important in an intercultural and gender-sensitive perspective is the recognition that this balance is not achieved in the same way across all individuals or contexts. Rather than a fixed universal model, successful ageing should be interpreted as a dynamic and situated process, shaped by lived experience, cultural expectations, and unequal access to educational and social resources.

This convergence of perspectives offers a useful foundation for integrating the concept of successful ageing into adult and continuing education. In this context, learning is not limited to cognitive development, but also functions as a mechanism that supports autonomy, maintains motivation, and contributes to the preservation of quality of life in later adulthood.

The Biopsychosocial Development Profile of Older Adults

The third age can be understood as a distinct stage of the life course, characterised by the interplay of biological, psychological, and social changes that influence how individuals function, perceive themselves, relate to others, and engage in educational activities. Contemporary gerontological approaches increasingly move beyond reductionist interpretations of ageing that focus exclusively on decline, instead emphasising the diversity of ageing trajectories and the strong influence of contextual factors on individual development.

From *a biological perspective*, ageing involves gradual physiological changes such as reduced muscle strength, decreased bone density, lower sensory acuity, and increased susceptibility to chronic health conditions. However, these changes should not be interpreted in deterministic terms, as their impact is significantly mediated by lifestyle, health behaviours, and social conditions.

However, empirical research shows that these changes do not follow a uniform trajectory and do not in-

evitably lead to functional loss. The concept of developmental plasticity supports the idea that biological ageing is significantly influenced by lifestyle, physical activity, access to healthcare, and engagement in cognitively and socially stimulating activities. The World Health Organization emphasises that functional ability, rather than the mere absence of disease, represents the central criterion of healthy ageing [22].

At the *cognitive level*, the third age is marked by a differentiation between components of intellectual functioning. While processing speed and working memory may show moderate decline, crystallised intelligence - including accumulated knowledge, life experience, and verbal abilities -tends to remain stable or may even improve. This cognitive profile helps explain why older adults often demonstrate well-developed capacities for reflection, contextual judgement, and experiential integration. These abilities are particularly relevant in learning environments that rely on dialogue, the exchange of experience, and critical reflection, where personal and collective knowledge intersect in meaningful ways.

From *a psychological perspective*, later life is characterised by a gradual reorientation of existential priorities. Attention tends to shift away from externally defined achievements toward processes of meaning-making, biographical coherence, and the integration of lived experiences. Within Erikson's psychosocial framework (1982), this developmental stage is defined by the tension between ego integrity and despair, with positive resolution associated with the acceptance of one's life as a meaningful and coherent whole. In this phase, individuals frequently engage in retrospective evaluation of their life course, accompanied by an intensified search for meaning and a stronger need for symbolic recognition and social validation [5].

Ageing may also be accompanied by a qualitative shift in the individual's relationship with self and the surrounding world. Many older adults show an increased orientation toward existential, spiritual, and relational dimensions, while placing less emphasis on competition, social status, or material accumulation. This transformation has direct implications for learning motivation, as it tends to favour educational activities that carry cultural, symbolic, and identity-related relevance.

From *a social perspective*, later adulthood is often associated with the reconfiguration of social roles and positions, particularly in the context of retirement, changes in family responsibilities, and the loss of significant relationships. Although such transitions may heighten the risk of social isolation, they can also create space for redefining social identity and for participation in community-based, educational, or voluntary activities. Empirical evidence consistently highlights that maintaining an active social role remains a key protective factor for psychological well-being and cognitive health in older adults [17, p. 165].

Gender differences play an important role in shaping how these biological, psychological, and social changes are experienced and integrated. Older women's life trajectories are often marked by caregiving responsibilities and discontinuous employment histories, which may contribute to lower financial security but stronger and more diversified social networks. By contrast, older men may experience the loss of occupational status and work-related identity more acutely, which can increase their vulnerability to social isolation after retirement. These differences are particularly relevant when analysing motivational patterns and participation in lifelong learning.

Furthermore, the experience of later life is strongly shaped by cultural context. In some societies, older adults are socially recognised as custodians of knowledge and tradition, whereas in others they may be exposed to negative stereotypes associated with decline and dependency. From an intercultural perspective, these cultural frameworks significantly influence attitudes toward ageing, access to educational opportunities, and participation in learning activities, making them essential considerations in the design of inclusive and diversity-sensitive educational programmes.

In conclusion, the biological, psychological, and social dimensions of the third age describe a developmental profile characterised by heterogeneity, plasticity, and continued potential for growth. A clear understanding of these dimensions provides a necessary foundation for analysing the motivational needs of older adults and for designing educational interventions that reflect life experience, autonomy, cultural diversity, and gendered life trajectories. These issues will be further developed in the following section.

Motivational Needs of Older Adults

The motivational needs of older adults are shaped by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social transformations associated with the ageing process. Rather than indicating a decline in motivational capacity, these needs should be understood as a restructuring of priorities and sources of satisfaction, increasingly oriented toward quality of life, autonomy, and the search for existential meaning.

Specialised literature consistently highlights that motivational patterns in later life are also influenced by gender, as a result of differentiated educational, occupational, and family trajectories accumulated across the life course. In this regard, older women more frequently emphasise interpersonal relationships, affiliation, and social support, whereas older men tend to attach greater importance to autonomy, social status, and the maintenance of active roles. These differences are not purely individual, but reflect culturally and historically shaped expectations regarding gender roles [2].

A key component of motivation in later adulthood is the increased *need for security*, understood both in physical terms (health status and access to healthcare services) and in psychosocial terms (financial stability, predictability of living conditions, and social protection). In the context of heightened vulnerability and potential dependency, these needs often acquire a central role, influencing the activation and sustainability of higher-order motivational drives. At the same time, older adults demonstrate a persistent orientation toward *autonomy* and *self-determination*, expressed through a desire to remain actively involved in decisions that concern their lives.

In this context, perceived loss of control may function as a strong demotivating factor, with negative implications for self-esteem and engagement. Conversely, the fulfilment of autonomy needs appears to play a crucial role in maintaining intrinsic motivation and supporting psychological well-being in later life.

Another distinctive aspect of motivational needs in older adults is *the desire for recognition of accumulated skills and experience*. Participation in activities that allow knowledge transfer, mentoring, or community engagement fulfills the need for social utility and supports personal identity (Erikson, 1982). Motivation at this stage is less oriented toward long-term goals and more toward *imbuing life experiences with meaning*. The need for biographical coherence and integration of past experiences is central, associated with achieving ego integrity [5].

Activities with symbolic, cultural, or spiritual value have high motivational potential. Older adults often tend to narrow the scope of their social interactions, giving priority to relationships that offer *emotional support* and *affective satisfaction*. In this context, motivational orientations gradually shift from the quantity of social contacts toward the quality and depth of social bonds.

The expression and hierarchy of motivational needs are strongly influenced by *cultural context.* In collectivist societies, emphasis is typically placed on relationships, solidarity, and group belonging, whereas in individualistic contexts autonomy and personal achievement are more strongly valued. These culturally embedded frameworks also shape older adults' openness toward participation in educational and community-based activities [10, p. 80].

Motivation in later life is further conditioned by the immediate social and *educational environment*. Environments characterised by respect, empathy, and the absence of age-based discrimination tend to support engagement and participation, while stereotypical or paternalistic attitudes often have a discouraging effect. Compared to earlier stages of adulthood, older learners are generally less responsive to external incentives such as material rewards or social status, and more influenced by *intrinsic factors*, including personal relevance, intellectual curiosity, and emotional fulfilment [12]. For this reason, educational programmes addressed to older adults require careful adaptation to both cultural and gender-specific contexts, in order to ensure meaningful participation and sustained engagement.

In addition, motivational needs in later adulthood are closely connected to respect for *individual functional rhythms*. When cognitive or physical demands exceed personal capacity, they may generate anxiety, reduced confidence, or withdrawal from learning activities. In contrast, appropriately paced instruction, flexible content, and supportive pedagogical strategies contribute to persistence and reinforce the sense of competence.

Taken together, motivational patterns in later life appear as deeply contextualised, being centred on autonomy, meaning, security, and meaningful social relationships. From an intercultural and gender-sensitive perspective, learning motivation in older adulthood should therefore be understood as a dynamic construct, continuously shaped by life experience, cultural norms, and socially internalised roles.

Lifelong Education for Older Adults

Continuing education for older adults is widely recognised at the international level as a key component of active ageing. This perspective reflects an important shift in how ageing is conceptualised, moving away from a deficit-oriented model toward an approach that emphasises accumulated experience, autonomy, and sustained social participation. From an intercultural standpoint, this transformation is particularly significant, since perceptions of ageing, learning, and the social roles of older adults are not universal, but are shaped by cultural norms, gender expectations, and broader socio-economic contexts.

At the policy level, both the United Nations and the World Health Organization consistently underline the strategic role of lifelong learning in supporting the health and well-being of older persons. A relevant example is the *UN Decade of Healthy Ageing* (2021–2030) [22], which proposes a coordinated global framework aimed at improving the quality of life of older people through integrated, cross-sectoral interventions.

This initiative is important not only because it acknowledges ageing as a heterogeneous process, but also because it explicitly recognises diversity - including gender, cultural background, and social conditions - as a determinant of quality of life in later adulthood. In this context, health in older age is understood in a broader sense, extending beyond access to healthcare services and including sustained participation in social, educational, and community life, where education plays a particularly significant role.

The WHO underlines that maintaining functional capacity - physical, cognitive, and social -depends significantly on opportunities for lifelong learning and active engagement. From this perspective, unequal access to education in intercultural contexts can either facilitate or restrict older adults' participation and motivation, thereby contributing either to the reproduction of social inequalities or, conversely, to processes of inclusion and empowerment.

In a similar normative direction, *the United Nations Principles for Older Persons* (1991) [20] outline five fundamental dimensions of ageing with dignity: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment, and dignity. Rather than functioning as isolated categories, these principles collectively articulate a broader vision in which older adults are recognised as active social actors who should benefit from real opportunities for autonomy, development, and meaningful participation, regardless of their socio-economic position.

Within this framework, lifelong learning extends beyond its strictly educational function and becomes a mechanism for promoting social equity, supporting self-realisation, and strengthening active citizenship in later life.

At the European level, *the European Association for the Education of Adults* (EAEA) [6] stresses that adult education must remain accessible, flexible, and responsive to diversity in all its forms, including cultural background, life experience, and gender-related differences. This implies the development of both formal and non-formal learning environments that foster digital competences, transversal skills, and the systematic recognition of prior experiential learning. At the same time, the effectiveness of these approaches depends on the continuous professional development of educators, particularly in relation to intercultural, inclusive, and gender-sensitive pedagogical practices.

At the national level, the Republic of Moldova has aligned its strategic directions with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through *the National Programme on Active and Healthy Ageing* (2023–2027) [15]. This policy framework builds on commitments assumed within the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), which emphasises dignity, security, and participation as core principles of ageing well.

The programme addresses a set of interrelated priorities, including the strengthening of institutional capacities, the promotion of social inclusion, improved access to education, and the development of age-friendly environments. Within this broader framework, education is positioned not as an isolated sector, but as a transversal pillar that supports autonomy, participation, and active ageing.

A concrete expression of these principles can be observed in *the University of the Third Age* (U3A), which operates as a structured educational initiative dedicated to older adults. Originating in 1973 in Toulouse under the initiative of P. Vellas, U3A has evolved into an international model promoting social participation, cognitive stimulation, and active ageing.

Two main organisational models have emerged: the French model, integrated into universities and structured around formal teaching, and the Anglo-Saxon model, based on self-organisation, peer learning, and voluntary participation [16, p. 73]. Both models reflect different philosophies of adult education, but share the same goal of promoting active engagement in later life.

In the Republic of Moldova, the University of the Third Age (U3A) has been developed through collaboration between public institutions, universities, and international organisations. Since 2023, programmes have been initiated at Moldova State University and subsequently expanded at national level, providing older adults with structured learning opportunities in areas such as digital literacy, foreign languages, health education, law, history, and physical well-being.

Through these developments, U3A supports digital inclusion, fosters intergenerational dialogue, and promotes the recognition of older adults' experiential knowledge. In this way, it aligns with broader national and European strategies on lifelong learning, while also responding to the specific educational and social needs of older learners.

Conclusions

The analysis of education for older adults highlights the need to understand successful ageing as a multidimensional and dynamic process that extends beyond biological functioning. Rather than being limited to physical health, ageing in contemporary societies increasingly involves psychological adaptation and sustained social participation. In this sense, the biopsychosocial profile of older adults reflects a continuous interaction between health status, cognitive-emotional functioning, and the surrounding social environment, which together shape opportunities for learning and engagement.

The findings suggest that motivation in later life is primarily driven by intrinsic factors such as personal development, self-actualisation, and the desire to remain intellectually active. External incentives, including social recognition, appear to play a secondary role. This pattern indicates that educational approaches for older adults are most effective when they support autonomy and create space for meaningful engagement with prior life experience, rather than focusing exclusively on formal knowledge transmission. From this perspective, lifelong learning becomes not only an educational process, but also a mechanism for maintaining social connection, participation, and intercultural openness.

The study also indicates that educational practice with older adults requires a high degree of contextual sensitivity. Learning activities should be adapted to the functional diversity of participants, taking into account variations in cognitive pace, health conditions, and previous educational trajectories. At the same time, gender and cultural differences should not be treated as secondary variables, but as integral dimensions that influence motivation, participation, and learning preferences.

On this basis, several implications for educational practice can be formulated. These include the need to design flexible and learner-centred programmes, to incorporate collaborative and experiential learning strategies, and to ensure that educational environments actively support inclusion, dialogue, and social belonging. Equally important is the continuous adaptation of teaching approaches in response to learners' feedback and evolving needs.

At the policy level, strengthening education for older adults requires coordinated actions that go beyond isolated initiatives. The integration of senior education into national lifelong learning frameworks, the expansion of accessible learning opportunities, and the professional development of educators in adult and intercultural pedagogy represent key directions. In addition, public policies should aim to reduce barriers to participation and promote positive societal perceptions of ageing as a stage of continued development.

Overall, the evidence discussed in this paper suggests that education plays a central role in supporting active and dignified ageing. It contributes not only to individual development, but also to social cohesion and intercultural understanding. In this way, learning in later life should be viewed as a strategic resource for both personal well-being and broader societal sustainability.

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