



Representation and the Portrayal of Older Characters in 1st and 2nd cycle Student's Text Books: Policy Implication

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Abstract

Students often see pictures before reading a text. Hence, pictures in the textbooks influence the attitude of students toward a group that were represented with the pictures. The main objective of this research was to investigate the representation and portrayal of old people in 1st and 2nd cycle students' textbooks of Ethiopia with its policy implication. A total of 32 primary school textbooks were analyzed within the scope of this study. Document analysis were used as a major data collection method. It was found out that old people were portrayed with positive character that describe their activity in the society, have normal physical appearance, have minimum wrinkles, and socially cooperative. Parent role and grandparent role was used in the portrayal of old people while describing old people in the text books. All these show that variables associated with parental role like love and care were used as unique character of parents and grandparents indicate positive meaning given for the elderly in these text books. Finally, was recommended that curriculum planners should give due attention to pictures in text books since they have hidden agenda that they message to students. Moreover, since male and female were not equally represented in these text books it was recommended to consider it during textbook preparation.

Keywords: *Textbook; Pictures; Students*

1. Introduction

Maturing, as an individual change, is the physical and mental crumbling of the individual (Cottle & Glover, 2007). Despite the fact that maturing is an individual cycle, cultural qualities and different elements decide the worth that is ascribed to age and maturing inside society. Therefore, maturing isn't just an organic marvel yet additionally a social and social one. As indicated by a differentiation made by World Health Organization, the accompanying age stretches have been arranged: 45-59 moderately aged, 60-74 old, 75-89 old, 90+ extremely old. Nonetheless, when studies did regarding

the matters of maturing instruction are thought about, it becomes evident that people between the ages of 40 and 65 are viewed as moderately aged, and those over 76 to be old (Cottle & Glover, 2007; Hogben & Waterman, 1997). Not exclusively is a maturing populace an issue looked by all nations, however it is in reality the best issue that cutting edge society must face (Cottle & Glover, 2007; Dussen & Weaver, 2009; Gellis, Sherman & Lawrance, 2003; Huang, 2011; Klein, Council and McGuire, 2005; Lovell et al., 1996). For instance, it is predicted that individuals more seasoned than 65 will comprise 12.9% of the entire populace of Northern America by 2025 (Lovell et al, 1996). In 1980, there were 378 million individuals on the planet matured 65 years or above. That figure has risen to 759 million in the course of recent decades and is extended to bounce to 2 billion by 2050. The normal yearly development rate for the maturing populace has additionally expanded extensively. During the period 1950-1955, the yearly development rate for people matured 60 years or over (1.7 percent) was like the pace of development for the all-out populace (1.8 percent). By 2005-2010, the yearly development rate for the more seasoned populace (2.6 percent) was more than twice that recorded for the absolute populace (1.2 percent). Sooner rather than later, the hole between those two development rates is relied upon to augment in a few pieces of the world (AARP, 2004).

The aged population in different countries has different statistics. For example, in United States in 1900 there were only three million people over the age of 65. In 2007, there are more than 34 million. It was estimated that by the year 2020, twenty percent of the U.S. population were older than 65. As scientists and doctors find new ways to cure illnesses, more people are living longer lives (Kansas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, September 2007).

According to US Census Bureau (2005), nearly 5% of the population was more than 65 years in Africa. However, it was 21% and 7-9 % in Europe and other developing world's respectively. Hence, older population make up small proportion in most African countries compared to other regions. In all the world, the population of aged people is projected to increase by 2030. For Sub-Saharan Africa, it was projected to increase to 67 million by 2030 and 10.4% in 2050 (United Nations 2007).

In Ethiopia, the 2007 Central Statistical Authority report shows that 3,565,161 (4.8 percent of the total Ethiopian population) are 60 years and above. Of these, about 532,093 (14.9 percent) live in urban areas, whereas the rest 3,033,068 (85.1 percent) live in rural areas of the country. This number was projected to increase to 6.6% in 2030. This makes Ethiopia the 2nd largest country with population over 60 years in the continent next to Nigeria. All these show that the number of older people is huge and is projected to increase in the future. However, gerent logical researches show that most people know little about aging and their knowledge is based on mistaken beliefs about the elderly and facts given about the elderly population is very little (Palmore, 1998).

The constant increase in average life expectancy and in the numbers of the elderly adult population makes it necessary for individuals to comprehend their own aging process and cultivate a positive attitude towards elderly people (Gellis, Sherman & Lawrance, 2003). Negative stereotypes about age that pervade society influence not only elderly people but also the younger generations (Cottle & Glover, 2007; Dodson & Hause, 1981; Dussen & Weaver, 2009; Friedman 1997; Huang, 2011). Studies carried out on the subject of ageism in the US reveal that attitudes such as shunning elderly people and refusing to work with them have come to pervade society, including children as young as four (Anderson, 1999). If both ageism and an understanding towards age have its basis in the individual, then the knowledge and attitude of the individual on the subject may be ameliorated through the education offered in schools. However, Klein, Council, and McGuire (2005) emphasize the fact that no courses exist in schools wherein students may be informed regarding aging and whereby their own attitudes may be improved. As students do not receive any kind of education on the subject of aging in schools, they internalize the prejudices of society and indulge in ageism deliberately (Huang, 2011). Klein et al. (2005) indicate that education on the subject must begin in early childhood (ages 5-7) in order to equip children with positive knowledge about (and positive attitudes towards) aging. When current literature on aging education is taken into account, it is seen that the studies carried out on the subject are comprised of

descriptive studies which determine the attitudes and levels of information regarding elderly people, experimental studies, and qualitative studies which encompass the examination of textbooks as to how they cover aging education. Textbooks are significant tools which reflect societal perspectives and which are used for molding and orienting society. In this regard, textbooks are of critical value in aging education.

Many studies have been carried out globally to examine the way old people were depicted in different books. Whitbourne and Hulicka (1990) mention in their studies that all textbooks published in the US up until 1989 had problems on old people. Similarly, Dodson and Hause (1981) examined a total of 800 books, both children's and adult fiction, and depicted negative imagery pertaining to elderly people. According to an analysis of such imagery, authors consistently use adjectives such as "sad," "worthless," "poor," and "old" to describe elderly people. Old women are depicted as either fat or very thin and wearing aprons, whereas old men are depicted as wrinkly, white-haired and using walking sticks. Elderly people have been portrayed as cantankerous and intolerant of mistakes, engaged with passive occupations such as story-telling, fishing, and housework. Kalab (1985) on the other hand investigated 20 books on Sociology and Social Gerontology and observed that people over 65 were frequently referred to as "old" and "elderly." Stolley and Hill (1996) carried out content analysis of 27 different books on marriage and family, establishing that elderly individuals are regarded as separate from the rest of the household. McGuire (1987) determined that lifespan development books are concerned very little about aging whereas Kramer, Hovland-Scafe and Pacourek (2003) has found out that among the 50 different Social Work books he examined, only 3% of them covered aging at all. Huang (2011), in a study which examined a total of 44 books used in Taiwan schools, has discovered that only 3.9% focus on aging (only 1.9% devote a chapter to the subject) and that the depictions of elderly men and elderly women in the books are not gender-equal. Furthermore, elderly people are generally depicted as sick and independent on others. Even though studies on aging education and advanced age abound in international literature, studies in this regard are almost nonexistent in our country.

The main objective of this research was to investigate the representation and portrayal of old people in 1st and 2nd cycle students' textbooks of Ethiopia with its policy implication. The study is significant and valuable for two reasons: its focus on textbooks and contribution on fight ageism. national literature has no antecedent of this sort and the study will bring a new perspective to extant literature on textbooks. It is also important and valuable since it was reflective of societal attitudes towards the elderly, as well as the problems which must be faced as a consequence of an ever-expanding elderly population within the changing fabric of society.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

We may think that the elderly population are fairly represented in student's text books and portrayed with absolutely positive terms. Of course, we observe while they are presented positively on child rearing practices and experience sharing in social activities. However, little is known on how the elderly were represented and portrayed in student's text books especially on their demographic portrayals, physical characteristics, and state of health, personality traits, and situational aspects of choice, dependency, and conveyance of the concept of aging or old age people. Especially in an educational environment, the way these themes and contents were build, the stereotypical message they convey and the perceptions they create in the mind of our children are very important. Because the messages that student's text books convey about the elderly not only encourage children and adults to look forward to this period of life, but also affect children's perception of that specific stage either positively or negatively.

Hence it is a vital for parents, educators and anyone involved with young children to be conscious of the themes and contents included in student's text books.

In our country, even though there are few researches that were conducted on old people, there is scarcity of research that focuses on the way elderly are presented in student's text books. For example, Belay (2005) conducted research on the living arrangements for older people in Ethiopia. He focused on the economic problems of older people. Similarly, Kifle (2002) conducted research that focuses on the livelihood of older people in rural Ensaro –Amhara region, Ethiopia. However, it seems that there is scarcity of research findings that focus on the way the elderly was represented and portrayed in text books. Therefore, the objective of this project to fill gaps we observe on representation and the portrayal of older characters in primary student's text books.

1.2 Research Questions

In short, this study focuses on answering the following research questions.

- Is the overall portrayal of older characters in student's books positive or Negative?
- What personality traits are given for the elderly in primary student's text books?
- With what physical characteristics do older people appear in primary student's text books?
- With what health condition do older people appear in primary student's text books?
- With what social roles do older people appear in primary student's text books?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General objectives

The general objective of this study is to investigate the representation and the portrayal of older characters in 1st cycle student's text books.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To investigate the representation of the elderly in primary student's text books.
- To investigate the overall portrayal of older people (positive or negative) in primary student's text books.
- To investigate the personality traits given for the elderly in primary student's text books.
- Investigate how the elderly's overall health were depicted in primary student's text books.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study would be of significance for the following reasons.

- How old people were raised in primary school textbooks were investigated. Hence, it could have theoretical contributions in the sense that it will shed some light minimizing stereotypes on old people.
- The results of the research could serve as a base for planning available resources and determining feasible intervention strategies for bodies concerned.
- The fact that the research was conducted on the area where little research pertinent to the case in point has been conducted is hoped to serve as additional reference for those who want to make more detailed research.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

The present study is delimited to representation and the portrayal of older characters in 1st cycle student's text books.

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

- **Student's texts**-are books, book chapters, essays that are uniformly given for students for teaching learning purpose.

2. Methodology

2.1 Population of the Study

A population of the study consists of 1st and 2nd cycle student's text books as summarized in the following table. This means, a total of 32 text books were a population for this study.

2.2 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Since the purpose of this study was to investigate primary school student's textbooks as to how they cover the issues of old people language books (Afan oromo, Amharic, English,) environmental science, and social science books were purposely selected for this study. Language student's text books were selected due to examples they take on different age groups and science (environmental and collective) were selected due to contents they are expected to cover on topic under study. Moreover, environmental science and biology text books are prepared in Amharic and Afan Oromo languages. However, since their content is similar, only one of either language were included in the sample. As a whole, a total of 32 text books were selected for the purpose of this study.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

Among the qualitative methods of research, document analysis was used for the purposes of this study. According to Wiersma (2000) document analysis is a technique which is used in the collection and systematic analysis/evaluation of data. The examination of documents encompasses an analysis of written materials which are informative of the phenomenon or phenomena to be investigated.

Most research findings state that content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Occurrence is determined through the quantification of images (pictures, illustrations, photographs) and uses of language (words and phrases, characters). Accordingly, all pictures in the stated text books were coded and interpreted using checklist.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

For every book the visuals, texts, and visuals and texts were categorized according to seven themes identified in literature. Since there are a total of 32 books (8 from each subject), 16 data collectors were hired on contractual base from each of these four subjects and conducted content analysis of these text books.

2.5 Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis was carried out through the categorization of these texts about elderly individuals in the textbooks, whereas the numerical and proportional assessment of such data constituted the quantitative analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a descriptive research method involving

development of a coding frame and qualitative coding of data. The coding frame were both concept driven (defined in advance) and data driven (derived from data during coding) as described by Schreier's (2012) were used for data analysis in this study.

2.6 Ethical Issues Consideration

McNamara (1994) identifies five ethical concerns to be considered when conducting this type of research. These guidelines deal with voluntary participation, no harm to respondents, anonymity and confidentiality, identifying purpose of the research and analysis and reporting. Each guideline was addressed individually.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presentation and discussion of data collected using data collection instrument discussed above. First, data that deals with respondent's profile was presented. Next, document analysis related to overall elderly views is presented and discussed in briefly.

Data for this study were collected from a total of 32 1st and 2nd cycle Students' textbooks. The purpose of this content analysis was to determine the portrayal of older character in 1st and 2nd cycle student's textbooks, with its policy implications.

3.2 Presentation of Findings

The total number of elderly characters in 1st and 2nd cycle Student's textbooks as stated above was 103. As it is clearly indicated in table 4.1 below, a total of 12 (11%) female characters and 91(88. %) male characters were indicated in 1st and 2nd cycle Student's textbooks. This indicate more number of male character compared to their male counter parts.

Regarding their chronological age of participants, it is indicated using table 4.1 below that there were young old, middle old, and old old in these participants. While 3 and 2 percent respectively represent middle old and old participants, the rest 89.3 % were young old group. This shows more representation of old (55-54) age category. In terms of their age, picture indicated on the students' text books indicated that there was more young old age category.

Table 4.1 Gender and chronological age of participants.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Female	12	11.7
Male	91	88.3
Total	103	100.0
Young Old (55-64)	92	89.3
Middle Old (65-74)	6	5.8
Old Old (75+)	5	4.9
Total	103	100.0

Activity level of the elderly

One of the major variables considered in the study of key element in the investigation of the representation and portrayal of old people in 1st and 2nd cycle students' textbooks was the activity level with which they appear, of the images that represent the old people. An attempt was made to determine

whether the older adults were portrayed as positive role models and normal citizens conducting daily business, or whether they were shown to be negative and abnormal from the rest of society. As it was indicated using table 4.3 below, 90 % of the elderly were indicated as active, 2 % of the elderly were indicated as inactive, 2 % of the elderly were indicated as not active character. The elderly activity status was indeterminable in 6 percent of the pictures in in these texts. This shows active role given for the elderly while describing the elderly that imply positive meaning associated with the pictures.

This shows that the elderly was depicted with a task that requires not only their active participation and involvement but also that makes them desirable or cooperative and positive role model.

Table 4.2 Activity level of the elderly

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Active	90	87.4
Inactive	2	1.9
Indeterminate	7	6.8
Very Active	4	3.9
Total	103	100.0

Description of health condition of the elderly

Table 4.3 below indicate health conditions inferred from the way elderly were portrayed in the textbooks. As it is clearly indicated, 63 % the elderly were portrayed with good health condition and 25 % with minor health problems. Only 12 % portrayed the elderly with poor health condition. This means, unlike the stereotypical meaning that people give like associating the elderly with certain type of disease, the elderly were portrayed with good health condition in the text books.

Table 4.5 health status of participants.

Health condition	Frequency	Percent
Good	65	63.1
Minor limitation	25	24.3
Poor	13	12.6
Total	103	100.0

Description of Primary role of the elderly

The other vital variable considered in this study was a primary role given for the elderly while portrayed in the text books. As it was indicated in table 4.6 below, in 72 % and 22 % parent role and grandparent role was used in the portrayal of old people while describing old people in the text books. This implies that behaviors associated with parental role like love and care were used in portraying the elderly in these textbooks.

Table 4.6 Primary role of the elderly

Primary role	Frequency	Percent
Parent	72	69.9
Grandparent	22	21.4
Indeterminate	7	6.8
Boss	2	1.9
Total	103	100.0

Physical description of the elderly

One of the physical description used in the analysis of the way how old people were portrayed on the pictures regarding their skin, depiction of old people with wrinkles or slight folds on their skin. Accordingly, 41 % were depicted as having wrinkle on their skin, 36 % with limited wrinkles ,19 % with no wrinkle on their skin, and the rest 10 % of the elderly were undetermined if they have wrinkles or not.

Moreover, 70 % and 33 % of old people were depicted bolded and white haired. Regarding facial hair, in 87 % and 16 % the elderly was depicted as having Facial Hair (Beard/Mustache) and white hair. Moreover, majority of them were described as if they use physical aid. Overall, the way the elderly was described is with moderate looking in positive in 66% the pictures.

The text and illustrations were analyzed to see how the older adults were presented in regard to personal appearance. Judging whether a character was pretty or handsome or ugly or uncomely involved some subjectivity on the part of the coder. Generally, tabulations show that most of the older characters were good looking in their personal appearance.

Table 4.7 physical description of the elderly

variable	Frequency	Percent
Indeterminate	7	6.8
limited wrinkles	36	35.0
No wrinkle	19	18.4
Wrinkled	41	39.8
Total	103	100.0
Bald/Balding	70	68.0
Gray/White Hair	33	32.0
Total	103	100.0
Facial Hair (Beard/Mustache)	87	84.5
Gray/White	16	15.5
Total	103	100.0
Has Teeth	2	1.9
Indeterminate	98	95.1
Toothless/Missing Teeth	3	2.9
Total	103	100.0
Glasses/Magnifying Glass	53	51.5
Hearing Aide	50	48.5
Total	103	100.0
Attractive	19	18.4
Moderate Looking	66	64.1
Ugly	18	17.5
Total	103	100.0

Personality description of the elderly

The personality of the older characters was examined to determine whether they were portrayed as lonely, friendly, wise, helpless, loving, or whether they were the opposite. The results indicate that majority of aged characters were caring, friendly pleasant, while only a few were unpleasant in the textbooks. As it was shown in the following table, behaviors like loving and caring in 27% of the pictures, intelligent/wise in 18% friendly 7% and affectionate 7% were the major ones that were rated.

Similarly, they were also rated as lonely 24%, helpless 16% and angry 3%. Taken together however, the elderly was described with more positive terms compared to negative terms like sad.

Table 4.8 Personality description of the elderly

Traits	Frequency	Percent
Lonely	24	23.3
Friendly	7	6.8
Intelligent/Wise	18	17.5
Helpless	16	15.5
Loving/Caring	28	27.2
Overly Affectionate	7	6.8
Angry/Grumpy/Stern	3	2.9
Total	103	100.0

Overall evaluation of elderly

Overall evaluation of the elderly was presented using table 4.9 below. The results indicate that the overall evaluation given for the pictures were generally positive over 77 percent of the cases. Only 10 of the pictures were depicted with negative character.

This means, evaluation of the elderly on different areas of their life like tasks they involved in like physical appearance, health condition, interpersonal relation, or active participation in a society show that the elderly were represented more with positive characters than negative terms.

Table 4.9 Overall evaluation of elderly

Overall evaluation	Frequency	Percent
Positive	80	77.7
Neutral	13	12.6
Negative	10	9.7
Total	103	100.0

3.3 Discussion

The present study focuses on investigation of the representation and the portrayal of older characters in 1st and 2nd cycle student's text books. Data for this study were collected from a total of 32 1st and 2nd cycle Students' textbooks. One of the vital variable included in the study was the activity level the activities in which they were presented. It was found that old people were represented with active than in active status that was given positive meaning. Consistent with this finding, Fernia and colleagues (2008) reported that from a small sample of children in the US, approximately 75% of 8-9-year-old children gave either neutral or positive descriptions of older people. Supporting the findings of the present study, studies have also reported that older people have been perceived as warm, sincere, kind, and motherly (Cuddy et al. 2005; Barrett & Cantwell 2007). Contrary to the findings of this study, Whitbourne and Hulicka (1990) mention in their studies that all textbooks published in the US up until 1989 had problems on old people. Similarly, Dodson and Hause (1981) examined a total of 800 books, both children's and adult fiction, and depicted t negative imagery pertaining to elderly people. According to an analysis of such imagery, authors consistently use adjectives such as "sad," "worthless," "poor," and "old" to describe elderly people. Old women are depicted as either fat or very thin and wearing aprons, whereas old men are depicted as wrinkly, white-haired and using walking sticks. Elderly people have been portrayed as cantankerous and intolerant of mistakes, engaged with passive occupations such as

story-telling, fishing, and housework. This difference may be due to samples taken for the purpose of the research.

Regarding the activity status and physical description of the elderly, old character was depicted with active group of society with active role in the society. Unlike the findings in present study, Gluth, Ebner, and Schmiedek (2010) investigated whether older and younger adults were evaluated differently with regard to four different content factors of the Aging Semantic Differential (Rosencranz & McNevin, 1969). They demonstrated that whereas older adults were evaluated more negatively on the factors of “instrumentality” (described by adjective pairs such as flexible–inflexible, active–passive) and “integrity” (e.g., optimistic–pessimistic, expectant–resigned), they were also rated more positively with regard to “autonomy” (e.g., independent–dependent, secure–insecure) but no differences were obtained with regard to “acceptability” (e.g. friendly –unfriendly, pleasant–unpleasant). The authors interpreted this finding as an indication that a single evaluative dimension may not be adequate to describe evaluative age stereotypes, and they advocate a multidimensional conceptualization of attitudes toward older persons. Consistent with the present study, Huang (2011), in a study which examined a total of 44 books used in Taiwan schools, has discovered that the depictions of elderly men and elderly women in the books are not gender-equal.

Summary, Conclusions, And Recommendations

Conclusions

The following conclusions were derived from the results of this investigation. They should be considered in terms of the procedures and methodology used in this study.

- old people were portrayed as active individuals living normal lives in the text books and the overall portrayal of older characters in student’s books are positive.
- Personality traits like loving and caring, intelligent and affectionate were the personality traits used in the representation of old people in the text books.
- It is possible to conclude from this study that the old people were depicted with a task that requires active involvement and cooperation.
- In these student’s text books, positive terms were used in a description of physical character of old people.
- Characters that represent the health condition of old people show positive terms that indicate old people have good health.
- parent role and grandparent role were used in the representation of old people while describing the old people in the text books. All these imply positive meaning given for the elderly in these text books.

Recommendations

Students textbooks are crucial as they are for schools and inculcate knowledge and develop attitude in students’ mind. They are expected to prepare students for real world waiting for them in a society. In this regard textbooks are efficient tools in nurturing the knowledge and positive attitudes towards old people. The awareness that aging is a normal, unavoidable, and lifelong process (as well as an understanding and positive attitude towards elderly people) may be taught in schools by representing them using images that have positive characters.

Moreover, it is recommended that terms that depict old people as ill, physically damaged, have some impairments and weak should be replaced with positive ones since they may encourage discriminate

ageism a daily basis; and are criticized at work. For example, in rare cases, pictures that represented with bent-over posture, that has an implication that all of old people have this appearance. So it is recommended to revise textbooks related to this area.

It was found out that male characters were found to be higher than female characters. Hence, the reality that show the old people should be included in students' text books. Curriculum developers should examine the type of picture that they think represent them. It is also recommended that equivalent proportions of image that show both men and women old people should be included in the texts of students. This means, it is important to respect gender equality while these text books are prepared.

Moreover, implicit agendas which have a significant role in textbooks should be considered while preparing these text books. It is recommended that studies which examine textbooks and picture they possess on the attitude of students be carried out in the future.

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