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COUNTERING AGEISM THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING: EVIDENCE FROM JAPAN AND INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze intergenerational learning methods between elder and younger generations as a concrete form of lifelong learning policy for the elderly, intended to shift the paradigms of ageism and rōgai amidst Japan's rapidly aging population. It also incorporates experiences from Indonesia, which is beginning to enter an aging population phase, through the implementation of intergenerational learning in the Sekolah Lansia (Elderly School) program. The research employs a qualitative approach with case studies at the University of the Elderly in Japan and the Elderly School in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Primary data were collected through interviews with key informants and elderly students, while secondary data were obtained from literature sources. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks include Social Pathology (Rubington, 1995), Psychosocial Development (Erikson, 1998), Telling Stories /Kataru in Japanese (Sakamoto, 2005), Resocialization (Kasahara, 2018), Place/Ba in Japanese (Kinoshita, 1992; Kasahara, 2018), and the Japanese concept of ikigai (life purpose). Empirically, the findings indicate that within Japan's longevity society, efforts to counter ageism and rōgai involve engaging older adults in intergenerational activities with younger generations. By sharing their wisdom and knowledge, elderly participants contribute to the learning process of youth, while younger generations, through their active collaboration with the elderly, gain reflections on their own future. Theoretically, since aging is inevitable, such intergenerational engagement fosters aspirations for aging healthily and meaningfully with benefits for both individuals and the society.

KEYWORDS: Rōgai, Younger Generation, Elderly Learning, Lifelong Learning, Intergenerational Learning Perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenges of aging in Japan are intensifying, as demographic shifts occur at an unprecedented scale and pace. The nation's economy, society, and individuals are increasingly strained by rapid population changes. Projections indicate that Japan's population will decline by nearly one third, from 126 million in 2019 to 87 million by 2060. The elderly dependency ratio, defined as the proportion of the elderly relative to the working age population, stood at 44% in 2015, already the highest among OECD countries, and is expected to rise to 73% by 2050. Within this demographic context, expenditures on healthcare and social services have escalated sharply, contributing to Japan's gross government debt, which has reached approximately 220% of GDP, the highest level ever recorded in the OECD (IPSOS Briefing Japan, 2019).

Japan's aging society has led to a decline in national vitality and the emergence of complex social problems. One major issue arises from shifts in co-residency patterns, as adult children often leave their elderly parents behind for work, resulting in older adults living alone and experiencing loneliness. Feelings of isolation may lead some elderly individuals to withdraw from social life, potentially culminating in *hikikomori* and solitary death. In addition, many elders are vulnerable to poverty (*kōreika hinkon*), particularly those who are unemployed and dependent solely on pensions. Economic challenges also intensify due to the imbalance between state budgets and the growing number of centenarians (100 years old elders), especially in financing Long-Term Care Insurance and Social Security programs, including health insurance and pensions.

The weakening of family-based social support has compelled the state to assume responsibility for elderly welfare by introducing support systems in the form of social security and health insurance policies. However, as the elderly population continues to grow, passive policies limited to health insurance expenditures have become increasingly inadequate. Consequently, these measures have been transformed into proactive policies emphasizing lifelong learning as a means of promoting active aging and social participation.

In the *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy in a Longevity Society* issued by MEXT in 2022, it is emphasized that the age of 65 is no longer a relevant threshold for defining old age, as the majority of individuals aged 65–74 remain physically and mentally healthy and actively engaged in social activities. Moreover, the population of centenarians

continues to rise, reaching 95,000 in 2024 (Japan Times, 2024), a phenomenon that characterizes the longevity society. These individuals are considered to be living a "second life stage." Nevertheless, the proposal put forward by the Japan Gerontological Society and the Japan Geriatrics Society since 2019 to redefine old age as beginning at 75 years has yet to be officially adopted (Annual Report on Ageing Society, Japan).

2. LABELLING OF THE ELDERLY

In Japanese society, numerous labels are attached to elders. Terms such as *sōdai gomi* (*large household waste*), used to describe men after retirement who remain at home, and *nure ochiba* (*wet fallen leaves*), referring to retired husbands who cling to and depend on their wives, exemplify this stigmatization. Elderly individuals are also stereotyped as irritable, dependent, lonely, forgetful, slow, and frail, making them targets of prejudice across age groups (Takeuchi, 2024). Those subjected to such stigmas often internalize these negative identities, losing their original self-image and adopting the identity imposed by others (Horwitz & Scheid, 1999). It is therefore crucial to eliminate these derogatory labels and stereotypes, which reinforce ageism and undermine the dignity of elders.

Labelling and negative stigma directed at elders constitute a form of *ageism*. Ageism, broadly defined, refers to prejudice and discrimination based on age, particularly against the elderly. While it may sometimes denote generational traits, it is most often associated with stereotypes that equate aging with poverty, isolation, illness, and diminished productivity. The term *ageism* was first introduced by Robert Butler in 1969, the inaugural Director of the U.S. National Institute on Aging. Yet, if given opportunities, elders can remain valuable and contribute meaningfully to society.

This phenomenon has intensified in Japan, where the rapid growth of the elderly population places heavy financial, physical, and psychological burdens on the working-age generation (Moriyama et al., 2018). Consequently, ageism is frequently experienced by elders in workplaces, eldercare settings, communities, and even on social networking sites (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018; Skipper & Rose, 2021, in Shimizu, 2024).

A striking example of ageism emerged in 2023 when Dr. Yusuke Narita, a young economist at Yale University, controversially suggested that all elderly in Japan should commit *seppuku* (ritual suicide). Although Narita later claimed his remarks were taken out of context, his comments, framed around

the need to displace older generations from leadership positions in business and politics to make room for youth, sparked global controversy, particularly regarding euthanasia and social security.

Ironically, Palmore (1985) argued that Confucian traditions in Japan historically placed elders in positions of respect, making ageism culturally uncommon. In practice, however, widespread prejudice and discrimination against the elderly persist. The pressing question, therefore, is how Japan can shift the paradigm of ageism amid its rapidly expanding elderly population.

3. METHODS

The research employs a qualitative approach with case studies at the University of the Elderly in Japan and the Elderly School in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Primary data were collected through interviews with key informants and elderly students, while secondary data were obtained from literature sources. The following matrix in Table 1 presents the research questions, data sources, and research methods.

Table 1: Data Source Matrix for Research Questions.

Research Questions	Data Sources (Primary or Secondary Data)	Research Methods
How can the paradigm of ageism be shifted amidst Japan's rapidly growing elderly population?	Primary Data: 1. Key informant: Interview with the founder of Rikkyo Second Stage College (Tokyo), Professor Kasahara Kiyoshi & elderly students in <i>Kitakyushu Nenchousha Daigakkou</i> (Kitakyushu City Senior Training College) and Osaka Prefecture Senior College (Osaka) 2. Key Informant: Interview with the founder of <i>Sekolah Lansia</i> (Elderly School) in Yogyakarta, Mrs. Endah Dwi Kurniasih 3. Testimonials and impressions of graduates published on the official websites of Rikkyo Second Stage College and Osaka Prefecture Senior College Secondary Data: 1. Article about ageism, <i>rougai</i>, lifelong learning, intergenerational learning 2. Article about social pathology, resocialization and <i>kataru</i> concept (tell story), psychosocial development, <i>ba</i> (place), and <i>ikigai</i> (passion of life) 3. Lifelong Learning Policy for Longevity Society from Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) 2022 4. Survey Cabinet Office about Lifelong Learning	1. Case study in Japan (Kitakyushu and Osaka) and Indonesia (Yogyakarta) 2. Interview with key informants 3. Literature study

The criteria for determining informants were based on identifying informants most appropriate to address the research questions. I considered that the selected positions possessed the necessary data and expertise to elucidate the issues under investigation. To answer the research questions, the key informant chosen from Japan was Professor Kiyoshi Kasahara, a distinguished sociologist and founder of Rikkyo Second Stage College, a senior university established by Rikkyo University. Insights into Japan's aging society, its social challenges, lifelong learning policies, and curricula for senior universities were obtained through interviews with Professor Kasahara. In addition, experiential perspectives on learning activities and the benefits of education in later life were gathered from interviews with students of Kitakyushu City Senior Training College, as well as alumni testimonials available on the websites of Rikkyo Second Stage College and Osaka Prefecture Senior College.

For the case study of senior schools in Indonesia, the researcher interviewed Mrs. Endah Dwi

Kurniasih, a lecturer at Universitas Respati Yogyakarta and activist of the NGO Yayasan Indonesia Ramah Lansia (IRL), who pioneered the establishment of the Senior School in Yogyakarta. The interview focused on the conceptualization and historical background of the school, its programs and activities, as well as the challenges and aspirations for future management and educational development. Mrs. Endah had previously studied gerontology and elderly education in Japan, which informed her initiatives in Indonesia.

In addition to primary data, this study also utilized secondary sources, including literature on the *Lifelong Learning Policy for Longevity Society* issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in 2022, as well as theoretical and conceptual frameworks related to social pathology, psychosocial development, ageism, *rougai*, resocialization, the Japanese concept of *kataru* (storytelling), *ba* (place), *ikigai* (life purpose), and healthy ageing.

A distinction was made between theories used to

explain phenomena and those employed as analytical instruments. Rubington's (1995) theory of Social Pathology was applied to explain phenomena occurring within elderly communities, particularly in Japan. Meanwhile, theories and concepts used as analytical instruments included Erikson's (1998) Psychosocial Stages of Development, *Kataru* (storytelling) in Japanese (Sakamoto, 2005), Resocialization (Kasahara, 2018), *Ba* (place) in Japanese (Kinoshita, 1992; Kasahara, 2018), and the Japanese concept of *ikigai* (life purpose).

The theoretical framework and concepts employed in this study are elaborated as follows. Elders, when experiencing profound loneliness, may withdraw and isolate themselves, refusing assistance to the extent that they ultimately face death in solitude, a phenomenon referred to in Japanese as *kodokushi* (孤独死). According to Rubington (1995), this condition exemplifies *Social Pathology*, namely forms of behavior that deviate from established norms and social values, which in this context pertain specifically to the elderly.

Loneliness among elders, nevertheless, can in fact be mitigated if their inherent strengths are recognized. According to Erikson's (1998) *Psychosocial Stages of Development*, as can be seen in Figure 1, the elderly are situated in the final stage of the eight developmental phases. Having passed through the preceding stages of life, they now confront issues related to health and aging. At this stage, past experiences, whether successes or failures, become central to their reflection, and their primary need is to be valued. The central conflict is between ego integrity and despair. While their physical condition inevitably declines, their strength lies in the richness of experience and accumulated wisdom. What must be cultivated in this psychosocial stage is the emergence of wisdom derived from their own lives. Through socially oriented activities, elders can re-engage in interaction and imbue their lives with meaning. Conversely, if they are unable to participate in social interaction, storytelling, or sharing of life experiences, they are likely to suffer distress.

Approximate Age	Psychosocial Crisis/Task	Virtue Developed
Infant - 18 months	Trust vs Mistrust	Hope
18 months - 3 years	Autonomy vs Shame/Doubt	Will
3 - 5 years	Initiative vs Guilt	Purpose
5 -13 years	Industry vs Inferiority	Competency
13 -21 years	Identity vs Confusion	Fidelity
21- 39 years	Intimacy vs Isolation	Love
40 - 65 years	Generativity vs Stagnation	Care
65 and older	Integrity vs Despair	Wisdom

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Figure 1: Erikson's (1998) Stages of Psychosocial Development.

How can elders re-engage in social interaction? The reintegration of elders into social life can be conceptualized through the process of *resocialization*, wherein the elderly reconstruct their sense of self by mobilizing past experiences and narrating them to others, whether in the same age or even younger generations (Kasahara, 2018). Self-reconstruction during the process of resocialization does not arise

from external coercion; rather, it emerges from an internal dynamic of self-questioning that develops through interactions aligned with the demands of the external environment. Sakamoto (2005) in Kasahara (2018) identifies *storytelling* (*kataru* 語る in Japanese) as a central modality of self-reconstruction. Kasahara (2018) further argues that the initial stage of resocialization among elders is grounded in self-

reconstruction through face-to-face encounters with peers of the same generation, facilitated by learning activities.

Japanese society presents distinctive challenges in this regard: individuals often encounter difficulties in cultivating social relationships outside the framework of formal roles and institutions, whether familial, occupational, or communal (Kinoshita, 1992). Consequently, older adults require a structured *place* (*ba* 場) for resocialization (Kasahara, 2018). Such *ba* are exemplified by non-formal educational institutions, including senior universities, elderly clubs, and welfare centers. Within these spaces, elders engage in learning, discover *ikigai* (生き甲斐, a sense of life purpose), and

cultivate health and vitality. This is what is referred to as the principle of lifelong learning.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Under the analyses within the methodology above, several findings of the research can be overviewed in Tabel 2. The perspectives to observe in the findings are Ageism, *rōgai*, and intergenerational learning applicable in the two countries, i.e. Japan and Indonesia. The two aspects of positive (+) and negative (-) are involved, and encouragements and discouragements for the intergenerational learning perspective are also applied to find out their elements of the learning.

Table 2: Perspectives On The Ageism, Rōgai, And Intergenerational Learning In Japan And Indonesia.

Country	Perspectives to observe					
	Ageism		<i>rōgai</i>		Intergenerational learning	
	+	-	+	-	Encouragements	Discouragements
Japan		v		v	Eligibility-check; Govt, NPO; borantia (volunteer); state & private institutions; others.	Home-nursing; independent life; others.
Indonesia		v		v	Private initiatives; govt's encouragement (BKKBN); elderly ambassadors; private schools; posyandu lansia (elderly health post); religious activities; others.	Illiteracy issues; aging in place; others.

The research findings are then verified within the discussions below and synthesized into appropriate contexts that are occurring in both Japan and Indonesia. Descriptions on the perspectives, initiatives, and supports or encouragements from the Government, state and private institutions are also outlined.

4.1. Social Realities in Japanese Society: Ageism and the Rōgai Perspective

A 2021 survey conducted among 800 individuals aged 60–74 in Japan revealed that 75% of respondents reported experiencing some form of age-based discrimination (ageism). Women who work encounter age discrimination more frequently than their non-working counterparts, and the same pattern is observed among men. These findings are consistent with earlier research showing that older women face a *double jeopardy* due to both ageism and sexism in the workplace (Palmore, 1997 in Takeuchi, 2024). Crenshaw (1989), in her theory of Intersectionality, explains that women are vulnerable to discrimination, exposed to overlapping disadvantages based on gender, race, and advanced age.

Another finding indicates that those who experience age discrimination tend to adopt more

negative attitudes toward aging and report a diminished zest for life. A third finding, derived from longitudinal analyses of the *Japanese National Survey of the Elderly* conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology in 1987, 1993, and 2002 among individuals aged 60 and above residing in Japan, shows that elders who perceive themselves with negative attitudes toward aging subsequently experience poorer health and reduced social participation. These findings underscore the urgent problem of ageism in Japan, which requires serious attention and coordinated initiatives from the government and all stakeholders.

4.2. Rōgai (老害)

Since 2020, the word *rōgai* (老害) has increasingly entered the public lexicon. The term *rougai* is regarded as a neologism arising from social phenomena, composed of *rō* meaning *elderly* and *gai* meaning *harm* or *damage*. Thus, *rōgai* is used informally to refer to older people who are perceived as troublesome or harmful to others. This term has been applied to incidents of elderly individuals causing societal disruption, such as deliberately delaying trains, numerous traffic accidents involving senior drivers, or intentional shoplifting in supermarkets.

Survey findings highlight generational tensions and divergent perspectives between younger and older Japanese. Opinions are divided on the statement *People don't respect old people as much as they should*, with 32% agreeing and 24% disagreeing. Predictably, individuals aged 45–64 were most inclined to agree, while those aged 16–44 were least supportive. Another source of friction lies in perceptions of political influence: Japanese respondents were the most likely among all countries surveyed to agree that *older people have too much political influence* (42% compared to a 29% global average), with the youngest cohort expressing even stronger agreement (56%).

Equally striking is a result that seems paradoxical in a nation with a national holiday dedicated to honoring elders (Respect for the Aged Day, 敬老の日). Only 23% of Japanese respondents agreed with the statement *It is the job of the young to care for ageing relatives*, far below the global average of 57%. Even more surprising, those aged 55–64 was the least likely to agree. This raises a provocative question: why would the older generation not want younger relatives to feel a sense of responsibility for their care? (IPSOS Briefing Japan, 2019).

This generational tension does not arise because elders are unwilling to receive care, but rather because the middle generation (those of productive age) is already excessively burdened, which shapes their differing perspectives. This group of Japanese is caught in the middle, responsible for raising children, sustaining livelihoods, and simultaneously providing care for elderly parents and relatives. For them, caregiving is not an abstract obligation but a daily lived reality. Closer examination reveals, however, that what they truly lack is not only practical support but also emotional attention and companionship to ease their loneliness.

4.3. Addressing Ageism Through Lifelong Learning

Japan's government has prepared lifelong learning policies for all age groups, including older adults. Lifelong learning is understood as the process of acquiring knowledge from any source, without age restrictions, as long as it contributes to the transformation of values and norms. It represents a form of freedom in which learners voluntarily engage in education at any place, time, and through any method, according to the challenges and needs of each stage of life. The ultimate aim is to enrich personal development and enhance quality of life.

The concept of lifelong learning places emphasis

on the individual as the agent of their own learning. This differs from lifelong education, which carries a more passive meaning, since the term education refers to knowledge imparted by others (Ogawa, 2015). Lifelong learning encompasses a wide range of activities, not only intentional and organized learning conducted in schools and communities, but also sports, cultural activities, hobbies, recreation, and volunteer work. Whenever a change in one's way of thinking or attitude occurs, it can be regarded as an outcome of lifelong learning.

4.4. The Role of Intergenerational Learning Programs

One of the instructional methods recommended in the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy in a Longevity Society issued by MEXT (2022) is Intergenerational Learning. Addressing complex social issues such as ageism and *rōgai* requires collaboration across all age groups, including children, adolescents, young adults, and older members of society. To enable such cooperation, it is essential that each generation cultivates mutual respect (Shimizu, 2024).

The benefits of intergenerational learning can be outlined as follows:

1. Understanding elders and aging society. To build a community in which elders can coexist harmoniously with younger generations as members of the local society, it is necessary to encourage interaction among youth, communities, and elders themselves. Such engagement fosters mutual understanding and the development of harmonious relationships.

2. Transmitting knowledge and experience. Intergenerational learning provides opportunities for elders to pass on their knowledge, experiences, and skills to younger generations. This exchange not only enhances the sense of life purpose among elders but also enables young people to gain insights into life and work perspectives through direct interaction with seniors, thereby cultivating respect for them as life mentors. For example, elders may share their experiences in child-rearing, particularly in light of current concerns such as child abuse and parental anxiety. Conversely, younger generations can also transmit their expertise to elders. Contemporary knowledge, such as information technology (IT), can be utilized to disseminate information, while the wisdom and lived experiences of elders serve as valuable content.

3. Creating spaces for daily intergenerational interaction.

Given the current decline in intergenerational

interaction within households, it has become increasingly important to intentionally establish opportunities for engagement between younger generations and elders in public spaces such as community centers, welfare centers, museums, and similar venues.

Figure 2 illustrates examples of intergenerational



Figure 2: The Role of Elders in Japan's Intergenerational Learning.

Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology.

4.5. Intergenerational Learning In Japan

1. *Osakafu Kōreisha Daigakkō (Osaka Prefecture Senior College)*

A significant number of elders in Japan pursue education later in life. One notable example is the enrollment of seniors at *Osakafu Kōreisha Daigakkō* (commonly abbreviated as *Kōdai*). The mission of this university for elders is to foster elders who are socially engaged and healthy through lifelong learning, and to cultivate seniors who, though few in number, can contribute meaningfully to society.

Eligibility for admission requires students to be at least 50 years old, and the institution is open to all applicants, whether residing within Osaka Prefecture or beyond. The acceptance of *pre-seniors* from the age of 50 reflects Japan's lifelong learning policy aimed at promoting anticipatory socialization. This form of secondary socialization prepares individuals for new social roles (Sunarto, 1993), thereby equipping them to adapt to the challenges and responsibilities of later life.

To provide opportunities for older adults to play an active role in supporting education and child-rearing in schools, the involvement of local governments, non-profit organizations (NPOs), and related institutions is essential. For example, *Osakafu Kōreisha Daigakkō* collaborates with elementary schools in Osaka to conduct educational activities such as milk-awareness programs for students. These

learning activities. For instance, elders may volunteer to read picture books to toddlers or elementary school students, or accompany children during school field trips. Such practices not only foster meaningful connections across generations but also strengthen the social role of elders as active contributors to community life.

activities are typically held on weekends and take the form of practical sessions on education and child-rearing, utilizing spare classrooms after school hours. Such initiatives represent intergenerational learning, as they engage citizens from different age groups in shared educational experiences. Elders are included because of their extensive experience in raising and nurturing children. Strengthening partnerships with local communities, such as opening schools to the public as spaces where elders can apply their knowledge and learning outcomes, is therefore crucial. In response, the government has issued policies to reinforce cooperation between schools and communities, thereby creating school and childcare environments that are welcoming and supportive of elders.

Another flagship program at this senior university is the *Adobaisu Silver Program* (Advisor Silver Program), which prepares participants to obtain a volunteer license (*shikaku*). Upon completion of the program, the license is issued by the Governor of Osaka, granting elders official permission to serve as community volunteers (*borantia*). Since certain volunteer roles require formal licensing, this program was established to meet that need, for example, elders' volunteers serving as instructors. Within the *Adobaisu Silver Program*, participants are trained to become coordinators or advisors for local activities by drawing upon their knowledge and experience. The program consists of two main

components:

1. Activities with children, such as science experiments and toy-making (*Kodomo to Fureau, Kagaku jikken te zukuri omocha ka*), conducted in collaboration with elementary schools.

2. International cultural exchange (*kokusai bunka kōryū kai*) in the form of Intercultural Events.

According to program coordinator, Fukunanasan, Indonesian culture, specifically the *angklung*, has been included as one of the agendas in the international exchange program. Participation in the *Adobaisu* Silver Program requires additional costs, such as teaching materials, meeting expenses, and related fees.

2. Intergenerational Class in Rikkyo Second Stage College

Rikkyo Second Stage College (RSSC) was established in April 2008 as a lifelong learning institution provided by Rikkyo University in Tokyo. Although not part of Japan's formal higher education system under the Ministry of Education, RSSC functions as an affiliated unit of Rikkyo University. As its name suggests, the college was initially designed for the first cohort of baby boomers (born 1947–1949), retired elders seeking renewed challenges in their *second stage of life*. However, the admission today is open to *pre-seniors* aged 50 and above.

RSSC serves as a platform where elders gather not only to build networks with peers but also to participate actively in communities and society. At its founding in 2008, the college attracted 1,500 applicants aged 50 and above, from which 170 were shortlisted for a quota of 70 students. The entrance examination required a fee of 10,000 yen and consisted of a 2,500-character personal history essay and an interview. Applicants were evenly split between men and women, with an average age of 61. Their educational backgrounds were diverse: 26% high school graduates, 7% vocational school graduates, 64% college or university graduates, and 3% postgraduates. Notably, across ten rounds of selection, the average age and educational profile of

applicants remained consistent.

The strong enthusiasm of pre-seniors and seniors in Japan for returning to education is evident from the comments and explanations provided in their entrance essays and interviews at Rikkyo Second Stage College (RSSC). For example, one applicant stated: “I do not wish to study again because of economic hardship in my family. But after having finished raising my children and accompanying my parents, I finally have time to return to the academic environment.” Another reflected: “After turning 70, I began preparing for the journey toward death, but when I saw the pamphlet for RSSC, my forgotten desire to learn re-emerged.” A third explained: “During my school years, because of part-time work and busyness, I had no desire to study at university. After retirement, I felt lost about what to do. When I told my wife I wanted to study at RSSC, she was delighted.” (Kasahara, 2018).

The educational background of applicants reveals that female high school graduates were twice as numerous as their male counterparts, while the proportion of academy and university graduates was unexpectedly high, reaching 64%. This indicates that applicants to RSSC were generally well-educated, financially secure, and belonged to an intellectually active segment of the senior population. Interview results further suggest that baby boomers sought to re-engage in learning, while simultaneously expressing anxiety and uncertainty about life after retirement.

RSSC offers programs designed to meet these needs. Senior students can revisit foundational knowledge that supports living as *free citizens*, while courses are organized into groups tailored to their specific interests. Moreover, older adults have opportunities to participate in intergenerational learning by joining combined classes with younger students from Rikkyo University, particularly in university-wide liberal arts courses at the undergraduate level. In these settings, senior students may serve as commentators, thereby contributing their perspectives to the learning process. Figure 3 shows the curriculum framework of Rikkyo Second Stage College.

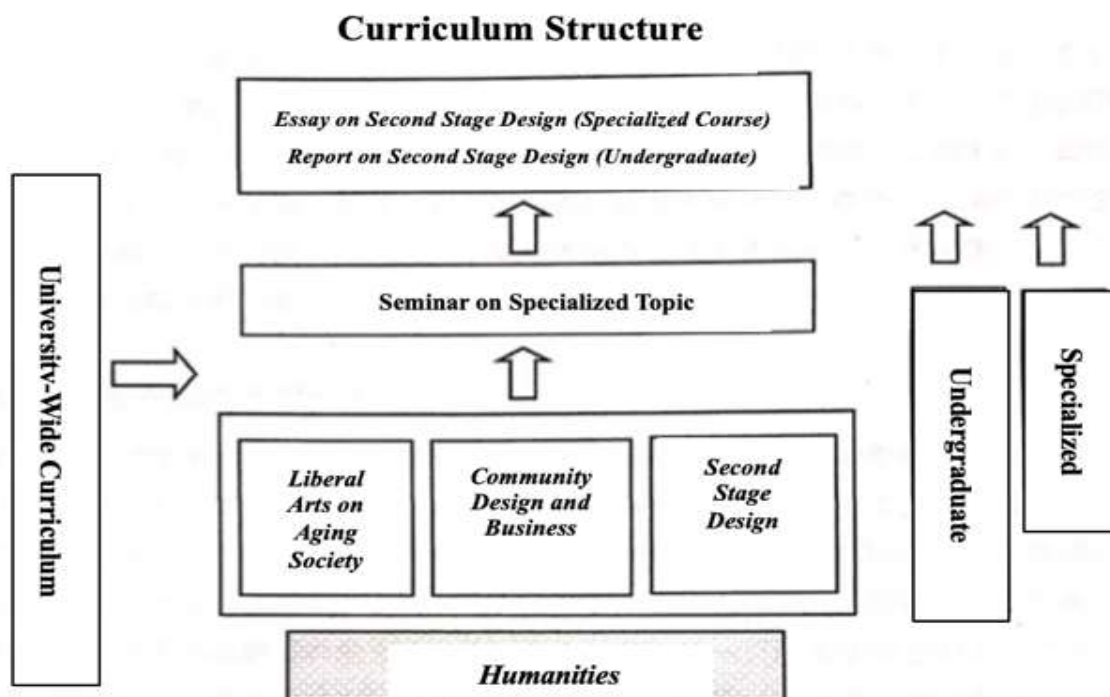


Figure 3: Rikkyo Second Stage College Curriculum.

Source: Koureisha Ni Okeru「Katari」To Ba Ni Imi: Saishakai Ka No Ba Toshiteno Daigaku (Kasahara, 2018).

4.6. Intergenerational Learning in Indonesia: Sekolah Lansia (Elderly School) In Yogyakarta, Indonesia

The initiative to establish schools for elders was first introduced in 2018 by *Indonesia Ramah Lansia* (IRL), a foundation dedicated to addressing issues related to aging in Indonesia. At that time, there was no educational program designed to prepare individuals for entering old age. Although the initiative initially received little attention from the government and faced financial difficulties, IRL remained committed to providing education for the elderly. For one year, the foundation consistently carried out educational activities for elders.

The program began by engaging with *posyandu lansia* (community-based health posts for the elderly), which operate under the *Bina Keluarga Lansia* program of the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN). IRL supported these *posyandu* by integrating a curriculum and structured learning outcomes, thereby transforming them into more organized and attractive centers of activity for older adults. As explained by Endah Dwi Kurniasih, the founder of the Elderly School at IRL: "We started with independent funding and initially enrolled 25 elders." The first graduation ceremony was held in 2019 and received national media coverage through Trans 7's *Hitam Putih* program. This

exposure drew the attention of the Yogyakarta Regional Government. Following an official dialogue, the local government agreed to support the program, marking a significant step in the institutionalization of elderly education in Indonesia.

The curriculum is based on the seven dimensions of active aging established by the *International Consortium Active Aging*. These dimensions define successful aging in terms of spirituality, physical health, intellectual growth, emotional well-being, social engagement, vocational activity, and environmental awareness. From these seven dimensions, specific learning materials are developed, with achievement levels categorized into Standard 1 (S1), Standard 2 (S2), and Standard 3 (S3). Importantly, these standards do not represent formal educational strata or academic degrees; rather, they serve as motivational stages for elderly learners, giving them the sense of progressing through levels similar to those in formal education.

1. Standard 1 (Basic Level): Learners achieve the ability to benefit themselves and discover happiness within their own lives.

2. Standard 2 (Intermediate Level): Learners, having found personal happiness, extend their contributions to their families and experience joy together with them.

3. Standard 3 (Advanced Level): Learners attain happiness not only with themselves and their

families but also through meaningful engagement with the wider community.

Beyond Standard 3, participants may advance to the role of *Elderly Ambassadors (Duta Lansia)*. Selected by IRL, these ambassadors are graduates deemed capable of delivering knowledge, educational games, and practical activities to other elderly schools, thereby serving as peer educators and role models within the program.

Monthly activities at the elderly schools are not overly intensive due to physical limitations, typically held once or twice per month. The most important objective is to shift the orientation and mindset of elders, encouraging them not to remain at home in isolation, but to engage in meaningful activities outside. The teaching methods include lectures, interactive group discussions, and role play sessions lasting about one hour, followed by practical exercises in the subsequent week. During field observations at *Sekolah Lansia BKL Mekar Indah*, for instance, the activity involved delivering material on the use of herbal plants for health. At *Sekolah Lansia Melati Dayakan*, participants also manage an elderly community garden.

A major challenge arises from the fact that many elderly learners are illiterate. In Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, for example, out of 50 participants, approximately 90% could neither read nor write. Despite these limitations, they remain highly motivated, attending school even across difficult terrain and despite physical disabilities. To ensure comprehension, instructors present materials in accessible forms such as visual aids or therapeutic movements. Examples include memory-prevention exercises, tongue therapy, and brain gym activities that can be practiced at home. Additionally, laughter therapy is introduced to encourage joy, as many participants report being unable to laugh at home due to unhappiness.

Different from Japan, where many older adults are placed in nursing homes or choose to live independently, older adults in Indonesia are generally described as *aging in place*, growing old within the family household. Family support remains strong in caring for elderly parents. However, despite this care, the conditions are often not ideal, and families themselves require education on how to properly support their aging members.

This is one of the primary objectives of establishing elderly schools: to foster older adults who are independent, dignified, respected by their families, healthy, and actively engaged in their communities. In their later years, they participate in structured activities, remain motivated to attend

classes, graduate, and proudly wear academic gowns during commencement ceremonies—an achievement that also serves as a form of education for their families.

Program design is adapted to the socio-cultural context of each community. In Indonesia, health check-ups remain part of the program, similar to those conducted at *posyandu lansia* (i.e., community health posts for the elderly). Activities are often held in local residents' homes, offered voluntarily as gathering spaces for elderly learners. In Javanese communities, where Islamic religious values are deeply embedded, elderly school programs also include religious activities such as *pengajian* (Qur'anic study sessions) and *hadroh* musical performances featuring devotional songs (*shalawat*) in praise of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Elderly schools in Indonesia have also implemented intergenerational learning. For example, during the *National Elderly Day* celebration on May 29, IRL volunteers, mostly university students in their twenties, organized social media campaigns by uploading content and photos with their elderly family members. Another initiative involved a field trip for elderly school students to the *Pleret Archaeological History Museum*, facilitated by students from the Faculties of Medicine, Nursing, Psychology, and Engineering at Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta. The enthusiasm among young participants was remarkable, with 100 students registering to join. Each student accompanied an elderly learner, engaging in conversations and sharing experiences. The activity left a lasting impression, as many students were reminded of their own grandparents, evoking feelings of nostalgia and affection toward their families.

Elderly schools in Yogyakarta also run other intergenerational programs in collaboration with *Karang Taruna*, a community-based youth organization. One example is the joint production of Eco bricks as a method of plastic waste management. Eco bricks are made by cutting plastic waste into small pieces, inserting them into used beverage bottles, and selling them. Each bottle is valued at IDR 1,000 and can be used as building blocks for gardens, wall partitions, and other structures. This activity not only fosters collaboration between generations but also contributes to environmental health by reducing plastic waste, which constitutes the second largest proportion of total waste composition in Indonesia (Afrezah, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Healthy Aging and Intergenerational Learning

Aging is a natural process experienced by all individuals who are granted longevity. For elders, a good quality of life is highly desired. The additional years of life should be filled with meaningful activities that promote health, one of which is through lifelong learning policies. Involving elders in education is a form of empowerment, as it is believed to foster healthy, resilient, and independent aging.

Beyond health benefits, participation in learning provides elders with positive experiences such as discovering enjoyment in life, building self-confidence, developing self-concept, achieving personal satisfaction, and enhancing problem-solving abilities. Research has shown a positive relationship between learning and health (Tam, 2012). The ultimate goal is to achieve *healthy active aging with longevity*. Engagement in educational activities enables elders to age healthily across physical, mental, spiritual, and social dimensions (Dewhurst, et.al, 2022). The promotion of healthy aging aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), particularly Goal 3 (*Good Health and Well-Being*) and Goal 4 (*Quality Education*), which emphasize ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all ages, as well as providing inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. This demonstrates that human development remains a critical issue in sustainable development strategies, including for aging populations.

Elders are valuable assets due to their skills, talents, experiences, perspectives, and resilience. They live longer and possess expertise, knowledge, and wisdom that often surpass those of younger generations. Through intergenerational learning programs, implemented both in Japan and Indonesia, ranging from preschool-level activities to collaborations with university students, young people are introduced early to the realities of aging. Such programs help them prepare for their own future lives and develop an understanding of elders. These younger generations will eventually become stakeholders and policymakers for aging societies; therefore, it is essential that they are familiarized with the lives of elders from an early age.

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