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Finns' and Ghanaian's Cultural Perception of Ageing

Doku, Ebenezer Bright

Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Laurea Otaniemi

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Ebenezer Bright Doku

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The Finnish population is rapidly ageing. My careful follow of the media reports shows that it is one of the great concerns expressed in the country. A press release by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland shows that the Finnish ageing population is one of the major problems in Europe in general (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2006).

Understanding the Finnish and Ghanaian cultures as to how they perceive ageing is detrimental in providing a richer understanding to how these two cultures understand ageing and provide concerns to how their lives are affected by ageing and their ageing populations.

A great combination of the various theoretical aspects is highly reflected in the study. The theoretical aspects of this study have been carefully selected to richly address the questions for the interview used for this study. Despite theoretical knowledge of ageing in the elderly care field, there is the need for clearer and better understanding as to how different cultures alike perceive ageing.

The study will compare the cultural perception of ageing between Finns and Ghanaians. It was therefore the objective of this study to give the opportunity to Finns and Ghanaians to express their own ideas, thoughts, and experiences on the subject matter that is still a top discussion. This study used a qualitative research method; the data collection method was focused on individual interviews. The participants were selected from the Ghanaian and Finnish communities in Finland. Five Ghanaians and five Finns within the ages twenty-five and sixty years were totally selected for the interview. The interview data gathered were analyzed using the content data analysis method for the study.

The findings of this study revealed that both informants have similar but also different concerns about ageing/their population ageing. Five main categories were formed as a result of the data analysis. They are human ageing, mental health, pension, generational conflict and services for the elderly. The findings revealed the ideas and experiences the informants have about ageing. The study shows that both cultures under study are affected vehemently about ageing.

Key words: Ghana, Finland, Ageing, Culture

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1 Introduction

''He who does not honor age does not deserve age''

''In youth we learn, in age we understand''

(Ghanaian Proverbs)

''A child unwilling to be taught must learn to dig trenches''

''One year ages the old, two years grow a child''

(Finnish Proverbs)

This thesis work is part of the R&D Safe Home project. It is organized by the City of Espoo, providers of elderly care services in partnership with Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Social Services, Active Life Village, Otaniemi. The project has been ongoing since 2010 and has consisted of various studies to help unveil, unfold and address the question; ageing from different perspectives on a more global level. The research seeks to uncover information's about how different cultures perceive ageing. Possibly what they say, think or perhaps the concerns they have about their ageing populations.

The City of Espoo is gradually growing into a multicultural society and to be able to provide more adequate and satisfying elderly care services to people from multicultural backgrounds, there is the need to understand what ageing means to them and perhaps unveil how they see an elderly person to be. This information will contribute to provide a more satisfying elderly care services in Espoo and across Finland. A recent press release by Kela shows that, the number of customer numbers at immigrant service points in Finland has increased tremendously over the period of time (Kela, 2011). This is a clear indication of the number of rise of Immigrant groups in Finland which increases the ageing population across the country.

It is my biggest hope that this study will provide a useful information to serve as a tool for workers in the area of elderly care service provision in the city of Espoo to be able to understand ageing from different cultural points of view. This research work will give informants the chance to voice out for themselves how they perceive ageing. This study is also in line with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health publication on one of the key elements in promoting and safeguarding successful ageing in the Social Welfare Act in Finland (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2008, 20).

This study has arisen from my direct contacts with elderly people due to the implementation of a project in Kontula Elderly Care Center during one of the projects I undertook as part of my studies in Laurea University of Applied Sciences for my Bachelor degree program. During the project implementation, a lot of the elderly people had the opportunity to express their emotions and feelings about ageing. I personally had the chance to interact with the elderly people and I provided them with assistance as much as I could. I began to realize how difficult life transition would be from childhood to old age.

I then got interested to undertake this research work as part of the project so as to help provide information about ageing according to different cultural view since I believe that one day I will also grow to become old. The information provided today will be of help to enable me get better service provision as an elderly man from a different cultural background in Finland.

The thesis uses a qualitative research method through semi-structured interviews to help understand the participant's experiences and thoughts. I hope this research work will help address the concept of ageing from two cultural perspectives, Finns and Ghanaians taking into account the researcher's nationality as a Ghanaian and his permanent living in Finland as an immigrant.

1.1   The purpose of the Study and research questions

The purpose of the study is to compare the perception of ageing between Finns and Ghanaians. This is due to the rise of the Ghanaian population in Finland and to also help provide rich information for elderly care work in Finland to promote the wellbeing and self-independencies of elderly people from multi-cultural backgrounds. The research questions were designed in an unstructured way which was used to ask the questions during the interview process.

The questions were carefully selected to solicit for the perceptional information from the informants about the study. There were used more flexibly which gave rise to asking further probing questions which generated new more answers. In gaining the set goals for this research work I opt to use the qualitative research method and there will be the same research questions for both Ghanaian and Finnish informants designed for the study.

2   The Background information of Finland and Ghana

2.1   Finland

Finland is a country that is situated in the northern part of Europe. It is part of the Scandinavia countries and a member of the European Union. Finland attained its' independence on 6th December 1917. Finland has a population of 5,259,250 (July, 2010 EST). The age structure of Finland's population for people between the ages of 15-64 years old makes up a total percentage of 66.1 % of the population. The male population is made up of 1,759,059 and the female population is made up of 1,719,173. The population of 65 years old and over is made up of total 17.8% of the whole population. It is made up of 385,671 males and 551,327 females (2010 EST). The Finnish population growth rate is about 0.075% (2011 EST). One of the reasons for the Finnish ageing population is due to the rapid increase of life expectancy (SuomenPankki, 2008).

2.2   Background information of Ghana

Ghana is a country that can be found in the Western part of Africa. It is part of the African Union and ECOWAS. Ghana attained independence on 6th March, 1957 and became the first sub-Saharan country in colonial Africa to gain independence. Ghana has a population of 24,339,838 (2010 EST).

The age structure of Ghana's population for people between the ages of 15-64years old makes up a total percentage of 60% of the population. The male population is made up of 7,435,449 male and 7,436,204 female. The population of 65years and over totals is made up of total 3.6% of the whole population. It is made up of 399,737 males and 482,471 females (2010 EST). The Ghanaian population growth rate is about 1.822% (2011 EST). One reason for the ageing population in Ghana is due to the improvement in life expectancy due to improved public health care, good nutrition and decline in fertility (Mbah 2007).

3   Theoretical background of the thesis

3.1   Culture

A culture may be referred to as a shared, integrated pattern of ways of thought and action that is transmitted from generation to generation over periods of time (Lull 2000, 54). It is the way a group of people live. The culture of a group of people determines their way of life. Cultures act as identities of people. The cultural life of a group of people helps in indentifying them. Every society in the world has its own culture. It spells the deep root origin of the people of a particular settlement/locality. In identifying people's culture, it is common to see them by their dresses, food, traditions and artifacts etc.

Every group of people in the world has their own culture. It tells the world about whom they are and it helps to shape their way of life. They live by their cultural heritages and they uphold it by passing it on to their younger generations. Every country in the world has typical tradition they adore. These help them to see themselves as one people from the rest of the world. Cultures are inherited from generations to generations. Cultural values and norms of people in societies help in shaping their way of life and promote their long cherished traditions by passing it on to their generations.

3.2   Human Ageing

Increasingly, the world's population is ageing fast. The population of older people is on the ascendance globally (Arcada U.A.S, 2010). More people are experiencing old age in their lives as a period of growth. The concept of ageing has no universally acceptable clear cut definition. The oxford dictionary defines ageing to be ''the process of getting old'' (Oxford dictionary). Different people perceive ageing from different points of view. Ageing is a universal, progressive and intrinsic process that every human undergoes in the stages of life development (Jose Vina 2007, 249). Population ageing has been among the successes of mankind but it is also the biggest growing challenges together with its economical, social and political side effects (World Health Organization).

Ageing is not a singular process, biologically humans' age, sociologically and physically, the ageing experience is determined by unique interactions between these various clocks (Samuel, 2011). The concern of the alarming rate of ageing across Europe has received recent beamed headlines from media sources as it in other parts of the world. In Finland, a current press release by one of the states Minister Risikko published by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health stated that ''Finland is ageing as the first country in Europe'' (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health).

The life expectancy in the whole of Europe is increasing all the time due to one of the primary aims of people living long as was outlined in one of the press release of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland. As a result of this, life expectancy has increased over the years resulting in the ageing of the population across Europe (Ministry of Social and Health Affairs, 2006).

In recent times, discussions on the behavioral and psychological processes used by people to maintain and reach new goals in later years of life have acquired momentum. Old age can be termed as the later stage in a life course. It is one of a series of life transitions that people pass through from birth to death. During life course, there are strong societal expectations about the socially accepted appropriate behavior for the different stages of life, as well as the later part of life. It is however important to know that life courses differ not only between various social groups but they do also differ greatly historically (Phillipson & Chris R. 2006, 9).

Again during the course of life, there are three life models or stages that a person undergoes through. These three stage models are common and are always seen as typical of the modern life. These stages namely childhood, adulthood and old age are always characterized by certain expected appropriate behaviors'. Also, each of the stages has psychological development across it in life hence an elderly person can be termed as a person of the age of 65 years and above (National Research Council 2001, 30).

Old age in many developing countries is seen to begin at the point when active contribution is no longer possible (Gorman, 1999). Active ageing can be seen as the process of optimizing opportunities for healthy living and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age (World Health Organization 2002, 12). Active ageing is applicable to every human being. It is a means that helps people to identify their potential for the development of their psychosocial wellbeing throughout their courses of life and to promote their participation in society's demands in accordance with their needs and capacities. This will help promote the provision of adequate protection, security and care when the need for assistance emanates. Active ageing has its aims to promote healthy life expectancy and the quality of life for all the people in the world as they age including those who are oppressed, disabled and in need of care. As one grows there is the need to maintain autonomy and independence which is vital for policy makers to render services to the ageing population (World Health Organization 2002, 12). In our societies, active ageing takes place within the immediate context of others such as friends, work mates, relations and members of one's family. As a result of this, there is therefore the need to promote their interdependent as important tenets of active ageing.

3.3 Ageism

The perception of ageing from different cultural backgrounds can perhaps possibly reduce the preconceived ideas of senior citizens. Different cultures have different views on ageing. Classifying one's age group as inferior to others may be termed 'ageism'. On other way round, it will be a way of perceiving stereotypical idea about older people and the stigmas attached to them in general.

It will enlighten the differences between the youth and the old and the financial burden societal old age will place on the younger generation in a whole.

The word ageism erupts into creating a root for a point of discrimination against older people in particular. Old people experience discrimination in two ways which are positive and negative. The negative part of ageism is the one that is mostly experienced (Cotter 2008, 9). In most African cultures, it is believed in the past young people always seek advice and wisdom from elderly people in solving their everyday problems. This is because it is believed elderly people have gone through a long journey in life and they have a lot of experiences on every matter. This in the twenty first century has changed. The perception and respect for the aged by the youth has changed due to society's demand and complexities today (Becky, 2011).

3.4 Mental Health

The definitions of mental health have many varied forms. People's perception of mental health can vary depending on their socio-cultural way of life such as their morals, culture, norms and values, religion and environmental factors. According to the definition of health by the World Health Organization, ''it is a complete state of general wellness in mental, physical and social well-being and not particularly the exclusion of disease''. Good mental health can be exhibited as the balance of a person's self and his immediate world's surrounding with the ability to live and cope with stress and anxiety that happens in a person's daily life (WHO).

The absence of mental disorder is not just a good ground for good mental health. The definition of mental health according to the World Health Organization is ''the state of a well-being where each individual can realize his or her own potential and have the ability to cope with normal life stress, have the ability to work productively, fruitfully and can make a contribution to his or her own community'' (WHO). People often use the words such as crazy, insane or mad to define the word 'mental' particularly the younger generation. They describe someone with such characteristics as been mentally ill. Adequate lack of information, education and misunderstanding of the word 'mental' have given rise to the basis of the perceptions of mental health related problems and mental health (Bailey & Shooter 2009, 151).

Generally, younger people feel happier more in their lives than older people who happens to feel less happy. This raises a greater concern about happiness and life satisfaction between all age groups.

In the course of people's lives, varied circumstances differ variably hence the differences in their level of emotional wellbeing in general. The ability to cope and enjoy life, have a healthy self esteem, the ability to interact with people and have a greater chance to look greatly into the future with optimism are the way to define ''emotional wellbeing'' of a person (Bailey & Shooter 2009, 154). Variety in the practice of physical exercises, having enough sleep, good social network, good nutrition and proper hobby practice can be of good help in getting and maintaining a good mental health by people.

The study of the exact causes of mental health related problems are not known. Among the few known reasons are genetic inheritance as biological, psychological, brain abnormality, accumulation of stress in life and also life's social factors such as trauma or poverty caused by environmental growth (Lönnqvist et al. 2010, 596).

The proportional prevalence of mental health problems in older people is often stereotypically thought as higher than that of youth and children which makes it bigger as in the adult population. According to a recent research on mental health related illness ''mental disorders are common in older people and pose a large barrier to active and satisfying ageing'' (Mental Health in Older People, 4).

Globally, mental health related problems are part of the important contributors to the burden related to disability and diseases. One of the world's greatest constituent of critical and social health problems is mental illness (Mental Health in the Workplace, 1). Mental illness has a negative effect more on humans' life and helps in wasting more human resources than any other disabling condition.

In the later part of adolescence life, the common mental health problems identified are mostly anxiety disorder and depression. These are also related to attention deficit disorders which are mostly common and disorders in behavioural which research shows that boys are more affected than girls. In seeking for professional help for this mental health related problems, girls always tend to be more active than boys (Lönnqvist et al. 2010, 596-597). In old age, the most common mental health problems are mostly schizophrenia, mood disorders, depression, somatic disorders and dementia which also affect all age groups (Atlas of Mental Health, 17).

''Depression affects 10-15% of persons over 65years'' (Mental Health in Older People, 5). Mental and physical health related problems affects older people making their health situations problematic and affect their quality of life. It is an inevitable consequence of ageing and not generally as health problem but develops with time as a person age. Generally, older women are always at higher risk of mental health related problems than older men. ''Depression in older adults is a risk factor for functional disability and can lead to premature mortality'' (Mental Health in Older People, 5). Depression in older people are about 2-3 times more likely to have prone to chronic diseases and also 2-6 times more likely to be limited on their daily life activity as compared to their younger groups (Mental Health in Older People, 5).

Studies show that the occurrence of mental disorders and depression in particular in Finland has risen greatly during the past years.

In Finland, the frequent group of diseases currently causing disability is mental disorders. ''In Finland, one adult in ten often reports from suffering a mental health disorder'' (Mental Health in the Workplace). Depression at old ages are always barely recognized and mostly severely under treated especially in later stages in old age. Depression in elderly people impairs their functions and reduces their quality of life which causes a higher level of poor physical health. In old age, depression is associated with somatic disorders and stress due to the perception associated with the disease which are life threatening, chronic and serious (Mental Disorders in Old Age, 5).

''Among the reasons for the increase in mental disorders in Finland include reasons such as economic recession of the 1990s, improved recognition and changes in diagnostic system'' (Mental Health in the Workplace). Mental health related problems accounts for a high economic burden on society. In Finland, statistics shows that ''in the year 1994, 2% of GNP were calculated as the total costs of mental health disorder, of which 50% of the figure accounted for depression and 30% of the figure account for schizophrenia'' (Mental Health in the Workplace, 5). Mental health related disorders are common illness in old age but they mostly remain untreated and undetected.

In older people, mental health causes the induction in functional disability, causes burden on health system, causes disturbances in rehabilitation and generally impair the quality of life of old people, their relatives and the society in general (Mental Disorders in Old Age). During old age period, there are lots of health related challenges faced by elderly people. Changes occur in the human body as a result of the ageing process. The greater part of these changes is the challenges of health related problems which are mostly chronic diseases, behavior and social related problems. There are changes in strength, flexibility, posture and pain that make older people more vulnerable to diseases. Old age emanates the reduction of a person's physical strength and ability (Lobo 2001, 11).

During the course of life, people lose many valuable things; however during old age these forms of losses become greatly evident and painful. In the eras of retirement from active working life, when people lose their profession, they are prone to depression more easily. During the advancement of old age; health issues are usually deeper and very complicated. People's health status begins to diminish which results in depression in older people since there is the feeling of their inability to take total control of their health contrary to their youthful age. These health problems further create denial therefore making their health to deteriorate rapidly leading to complications in treatment (Lobo 2001, 11). The lack of the practice of exercises for example during a person's youthful age makes the body prone to diseases which at a later older period creates more concern about health related problems. Ageing produces changes in people's health making the human body prone to all kinds of chronic diseases decreasing posture, endurance, strength and flexibility. Eventually, the end result of these health problems leads to death of some group of people but the majority lives due to the improvement of modern and quality health care delivery across Europe and the world.

3.5   Pension

Pensions help to provide financial security in old age (City of Helsinki). Virtually in all or most European countries, workers are currently covered under some form of either government funded or private funded forms of pension plan. This coverage under the Social Security System in these countries is mostly a predominant form of old age pension coverage. In America, the first American to receive an amount of 22.54 dollars a month as social security benefit was Miss Ida Fuller who was a retired law firm secretary in 1940 (Schulz J-H.2000, 131).

''The economic well-being of the elderly as a group is now equal to or greater than that of the non-elderly as a result of a large and sustained decrease in poverty among people over the age 65 years during the past twenty years……Although to be old is no longer to be poor, substantial pockets of economic insecurity and near poverty still exist among the elderly'' (Schulz J-H.2000, 2).

After retirement from active working life, a fix sum of money usually in cash is paid regularly to people who have worked for a period of time as to help them live a meaningful life and support themselves. This 'pension money' or pension contribution is always deducted from a person's salary during his or her active working life. Varied forms of contributions or saved money from salaries accrued are then paid to people during their retirement period which are usually termed as 'pension money'. They take different forms such through social security, public assistance, employer self sponsored pensions, private charity or personal savings (Schulz J-H.2000, 287).

Primarily the purpose of a pension system is to assist households to achieve the allocations of resources in life through a life cycle (Modigliani, F. & Muralidhar, A. 2004, 1). To able to fulfill this, resources are transferred during working life to the post retirement era when income generating sources dries up. Pension systems are set up as means of insurances against periods of uncertainties regarding retirement income to help create a better recruitment and holding incentives and to serve as tax efficient ways of saving (Modigliani, F. & Muralidhar, A. 2004, 1).

Across the major countries in the world and particularly in Europe, as a result of the rapid growth of the population, the need has risen that a larger part of the gross domestic product (GDP) will have to be used to finance the elderly people in time of retirement as pay-as-you-go-systems (Feldstein & Siebert 2002, 9).

In the European Union and European Union Accession countries, the need for pension reforms aroused due to three major reasons which included the high expenditure level and related budgetary pressure which was foresighted to worsen as a result of the projected ageing populations across the Europe (Holzman & Orenstein &Mitchell 2003, 2). In most Western European countries, the expenditure level of public pensions is quite above that of their other industrialized countries at the same income level. ''The average pension expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic products for 15 EU countries in 2000 amounted to 10.4 percent'' (Holzman & Orenstein &Mitchell 2003, 2).

In Finland, a current press release by one of the state's Minister Risikko says that ''Finland need for a clear line of action on how to develop Finnish society so that we can secure in a sustainable way socially and economically as comprehensive welfare and wellbeing as possible for the ageing population'' (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2012). The Finnish pension security which is statutory consists of package benefit earnings related pension that sums from work as well as the residence based national pension together with guarantee pension that ensure minimum security to people.

During old age, statutory pensions provide security (Finnish Center for Pensions). In 2011 in Finland, the average earnings related pension scheme was 60.5years for retirement which showed an increase of 0.1 years from the year 2010 (Finnish Center for Pensions). According to the European Union rules, the country of employment should cover a person by the social security of that country. Due to this, a person gets the social security benefits on the grounds of the legislation of the said country (Finnish Center for Pensions). Statistics showed that in Finland, 3.6 million people have been insured for earnings-related pension benefits. This figure was recorded during the end of the year 2010 where the age group is within 18 and 68 years (Finnish Center for Pensions).

About 2.4 million were employed where every sixth person insured for the earnings-related pension benefits which is 594,000 together got some form of pension based on their work history by the end of the year 2010 (Finnish Center for Pensions). The concerns of paying of 'pension money' as social security and soliciting of adequate sources of funding for the payment of this money to retired elderly people is fundamental to the establishing and upholding their basic rights of life during their old age period. This is to help deal with the economical problems faced during old age. The need therefore created a great concern through the phases of time in providing good and adequate policies globally, to ensure the continuity of this pension reforms to people during their old age.

3.6   Generational Conflict

Providing sufficiently for people's retirement period is a very expensive preposition. As a result of the declining of the continuity of the aged, the fulfilling of providing people with income and services for a period of time outside the working labor force provides a huge generational conflict. People have developed expectations that retirement period should be an enjoyable time of life and as that, the economic resources available should be enough to avoid limitations imposed on retirement periods by financial scarcity of money and shortage of credits of a country during retirement period (Schulz J-H.2000, 292).

However, generational conflicts develops when a country's population is greatly aged and the younger generations feels worried as to working to pay for retirees and also raises concern as to how to receive their benefits and enjoy their lives during their period of old age. Ageing pose a great challenge to generations over resources distribution. Ageing contains elements of high social and political problems. The imposing of huge amount of tax burdens on workers to help pay for retirees has generate a lot of controversies in conflicts within generations.

The term 'burden' used here refers to the distribution of pensions, cost of health care for example medical costs have a great root in nation's population change structure (Schulz J-H.2000, 284). This generational conflict arises as a result of adjusting a lower fertility and mortality rates across nations. Population ageing raises greater lines of conflict in societies between the elderly and the younger generation in situations where people live longer and have fewer children. This enhances the promotion of who works to take care of who which forms the main basis of struggles of the future of financial assistances during old age.

The decrease in the number of the aged in societies has raised greater concern (Schulz J-H.2000, 286). This has risen as a result of the increase in the number of people who are not working and who must also be supported economically by the working population. The concern includes the higher competition that may rise among ages in populations as each of the age groups strives to have a larger share of the state's output (Schulz J-H.2000, 287). It is a great fear by researchers, the media and policy makers worldwide concerning the raising of their attention about the alarming rate of the age population relatively to the working population and the means to deal with this situation (Schulz J-H.2000, 287).

3.7   Services for the elderly

The old age policy in Finland for example has its aims to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of the older people. The goals of the policy are as follows;

1. ''To safeguard wellbeing and the quality of life among older-people by promoting independent living and coping''.

2. ''To ensure self-determination and independence of older people''.

3. ''To create possibilities for senior citizens to remain socially active, for social integration and for harmonious development of relations between older and younger generations'' (Stakes Helsinki, 3).

The services and benefits for old people are varied. The different forms of services provided are in accordance to the old age policy in Finland. Older people's social protections include services and income security which are all embedded as part of the arrangement for social and health care provisions to boost the lives of elderly people across Finland. Each municipality in Finland is responsible for the arrangement of these services. These services are either produce by the municipalities or they can be bought from private service providers (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health). In Finland, the elderly service provisions includes the following; income security which takes the form of pension during retirement period, prevention services to promote older people's capacity to function properly, service needs assessment in the form of informal and institutional care, health services such as assistive devices, services for war veterans in the form of care, housing services such as reimbursement for work renovation, institutional care, informal care and memory rehabilitation by means of guidance and counseling (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health).

4   The Research Method

The methodology of this research work has been carefully discussed in three different divisions. The first division focuses on the informant's selection. The second focuses on the method of data collection for the study and the third division focuses on the description of the rationalization of the qualitative content data analysis process used for this study.

4.1   Informants

For the purpose of this study, the informants were chosen from the Finnish and Ghanaian communities living in Finland. I chose ten people making up the total informants for this study. Five Finns and five Ghanaians in all were involved in the interview process making up to ten informants. The Ghanaian informants were chosen from the Church of Pentecost, Helsinki International Assembly in Finland and the Finnish informants were chosen from Finn-catering in Vantaa, Finland. This is because I fellowship at the Church of Pentecost Helsinki International Assembly in Finland and I work in Finn-catering in Vantaa in Finland.

For the purpose of client confidentiality, the identities of the informants for the interview will not be disclose or traceable to help protect their identities since their participation was solely done for the purpose of this study. The identities of the participants of this the study will not be traceable or easy to notice to help protect the identity of the interviewed and all the information will be used only for this study and will remain confidential. Participation from of all the informants in this study was totally voluntary and it was by no means that any of them was forced to participate in the interview sessions during the implementation of this study.

The participants for the study were informed about the interview weeks before hand about their free willingness to take part in the interview and they were not forced by any means to take part in the conducted interviews. They were also informed about the project, its aims and the purpose of the study. One group was the Finns and the other group was the Ghanaians. Both groups were made up of five people. The participants chosen for the interview were selected between the ages of (25-60) years. This age group was chosen because in selecting informants in qualitative research work, there is the need to achieve the attaining of a completeness which means there was the need in choosing informants who had experience and knowledge about the subject matter and were willing to contribute their knowledge to discuss about the questions asked during the interview until what they contributed gave a sense of meaning of the theme (Rubin, 1995).

The participants of the study were divided separately. Individual separate interview division were used during the interview process been the Ghanaians and the Finns to give room for easiness and to promote the confidentiality to speak out about the topic willingly. Most of the participants were willing to participate in the study but they were not comfortable that the interview will be recorded.

Only one Finnish informant said he has an experience of how his identity was revealed in a study he took part some years ago. Due to that he was not willing to have his voice recorded. I assured him constantly and continuously that his identity would not be disclosed as the information gathered was solely confidential. All the other participants expressed enough self boldness in taking part in the interview and they expressed their knowledge and concerns vehemently without any obstruction. All the informants gave consent to the recording of the interviews without any objection.

4.2   Data Collection

This study work is to compare the perception of ageing between Finns and Ghanaians soliciting real life experiences, knowledge's, thoughts and ideas. In gaining the set goals for this research work I opt to use the qualitative research method and there will be one research questions for both Ghanaian and Finnish informants designed for the interview. The data for the studies was gathered by using a qualitative research method on a semi-structured interview.

Qualitative data gathering seeks to help to bring out the understandings and real meanings of life experiences, provide a good view of the issue under study and also give protections against statements that are ambiguous. There is the placement of a strong emphasis in qualitative data gathering on the ability to understand the real human life experiences; hence providing tools to document the view of the people studied from the point of the view of the world (Silverman 2000, 8).

Qualitative research is more interested in helping to discover and describe the complexity of a phenomena and new perspectives in order to find concrete meanings. Unlike other studies like static law, this method of data gathering do not unveil the principles that are true at all the time and in all conditions, rather it is purported to understand how and why specific things occur in specific situations. The knowledge to be obtained in using a qualitative interview approach in social researches is therefore conditional and situational (Rubin 1995, 38).

In qualitative research method, its' usage does not create the limitation of the researcher to the usage of existing theories rather it gives the opportunity to new theories and ideas. Describing in-depth the participant's events are all great concerns to qualitative research study providing a great ground in collecting qualitative data through methods such as semi-structured interviews, documents and text, observation of participants and reactions of the researcher (Myers 2009, 73).

During data collection in qualitative research study, there is always the probability that personal issues and people's state of mind, perceptions and ideas about the theme can affect the data to be gathered during the interview process since the data gathering process in interviewing is more interactive between the interviewer and the person interviewed (Koch 1998, 1182; Denzin & Lincoln 2005, 456).

Qualitative research method usage is best in social researches as it aims to provide the perceptions of the informants' experiences, ideas, and knowledge rather than giving mathematical calculations of results. Qualitative research was chosen as my method of study because my aim is to allow the informants from the two cultures to give and explore their thoughts and ideas about the theme. This chosen approach will enable me to explore well and describe in-depth the interview and the data to be gathered.

Qualitative approach will give my informants the means to express themselves contrary to what quantitative methods would leave out (King et al.1994, 3). This was because to able to get the informants to speak for themselves, interview was seen as the best means appropriate for the collection of data for this study. This is again because; interviews are purposefully useful to help to get the stories behind the experiences of participants.

Using this technique, the interviewer can solicit in-depth information about the topic of investigation and this will help seek to bring out both the factual and the levels of meaning of experiences of the informants (McNamara, 1999). The questions for the study were open ended to allow room for the participants to express their experiences and thoughts without limitation. It also gave a flexible pattern of furthering questioning in accordance to how the interview went.

Semi-structured interviews start with more general questions unlike structured questionnaire where informants strictly follow more detailed questions which are in advance formulated. The modus of operandi of a successful interview often starts with a standard set of questions for the interviewee but gives room for more in-depth follow-up questions at the discretion of the interviewer during the interview process. During the application of this interview for the purpose of this study, it was of great importance that I ensured that all the interview questions aligned with what was being looked for in the evaluation stage; thus making semi-structured interviews not to be completely as free as unstructured interviews (Myers, 2009).

In opening up the phenomenon of the theme 'ageing' in this study, a qualitative-humanistic approach was aimed to help elicit the attention to specific area of points that other researches has been missing. Qualitative research study also allows me to be more flexible in the course of my study. The usage of qualitative research method does not give room to leave out a more careful and proper evaluation of social service clients been my informants for the purpose of this study (Shaw 2002, 27). Been a researcher I need to find means to research that will not give rise to any form of harm on my subjects involved in the study.

This takes quite a lot of time on my part, nevertheless, participation of my informants will give them the confidence that their views do count and can be voiced and heard out by society at large. Having a more professionally open and dialogue attitude with my informants to be interview will help provide the chance to take away the suspicion and stigma that mostly lingers around personal interviews (Bowling & Ebrahim 2005, 539).

I had one to one interview; a reason for this is that the informants can have the time to express themselves openly and freely without any form of distraction. Also it was difficult to get all the informants together at a time. It was therefore better for me and the respondents to have their interviews separately. This was a big challenge to me as I have to interview ten respondents separately using the same questions.

Initially, I wondered how I could do this by interviewing each informant on turn. Since this study was very important to me and I had a great intrinsic motivation for this study, I was ready to embark on the one to one interview to enable the informants to have the time to express their thoughts, experiences and concerns freely on the theme under study. All the questions for all the informants were the same as during the process of the interview. New few questions erupted which provided more new information and clarifications.

During all the interviewing processes, I first gave a brief introduction of the project, its aims as well as the purpose of the study to each informant. This was done to help them remember more about the study since they were informed about the interview weeks ahead of the day of the interview. The informants were made aware that the questions were open-ended and they could express themselves as much as they could. I also assured them that, they had the chance to freely express their thoughts as much as they could. This gave them room to feel secure without any limitation by providing information and helping speaking willingly. During the interviewing most of the informants used stories in answering some of the questions giving accounts on their own experiences and life stories about time and ageing and how it has contributed in affecting their lives, families, societies and their community at large. One informant emotionally broke down on giving accounts on some of the decision he has made during his youthful period and how it has affected his present life in many ways.

Each informant was given the chance to disseminate the questions thoroughly until they exhausted all they have to say. All nine interviews were conducted on one to one basis where I had direct contact with the interviewees. I recorded the interviews and took note at the same time. Only one interview was conducted on phone. This was because it was difficult for the interviewer to be present on one to one basis because of his working schedules. We therefore agreed to conduct it on phone. I was a little bit worried as to how that interview could go but fortunately, it went very well without difficulty. The interview was recorded as well. There were gender balances in the interviewers' selection.

Each interview session took approximately 10 – 12 minutes. Every interview ended with a brief expression of thanksgiving by the researcher in expressing appreciation to the informants' for their time spent in taking part in the interview and contributing their quota to the study. In all, the ten interviews took approximately 110 minutes. It was a little bit difficult by spending time with each informant but at last it paid as I was able to have a more interactive interview, giving the participants the opportunity to air their views and express their thoughts freely on the study. There were facial expressions of joy from the informants as one informant said ''I am happy to take part in this study about population ageing''.

The interview processes took about a week. Besides the ten participants that took part in the interview sessions, I had also discussed the concept of ageing with many people, family, friends, mate and co-workers. This was done to ascertain the different views and opinions different people share on the subject as population ageing is a global phenomenon. It is clear that many people are vehemently affected by ageing positively and negatively. The entire interviews had taken place in Helsinki and Vantaa respectively. The Finnish speaking informants' interview took place in Vantaa whiles the Ghanaian speaking informants' interview took place in Helsinki.

The usage of semi-structured interview allowed the participants to have the chance to make their comments when they needed and also provided the interviewer the opportunity to gather more new information as new questions emerged and further clarifications were sought from the participants. Usage of semi-structured interview techniques gave room for the interviewer to respond quickly to what participants said by directing subsequent questions to the information the participant had provided (Brayton, 1997).

For the purpose of confidentiality during the carrying out of this study, no names or information will be released and any personal information will be handled in a most confidential manner as much as possible. The language that was used for the conducting of the interview was solely English Language as all the informants used English as their second languages. This did not provide much form of difficulty in carrying out the interview as I also had a good command and proficiency in the usage of the English Language.

Lastly, one evident advantage to me why I choose the one to one interview is that, I have seen other group interviews where there is a lot of distraction as each informant wanted his or her voice to be heard as this caused distraction. Only one of the ten interviews were conducted on phone and recorded whiles notes were made. The rest of the interviews were conducted directly on one to one basis. Notes were taken during all the interview sessions to solicit for clearer understanding of the informant's ideas. All the interviews were recorded to help give room for listening and interpreting of the data.

4.3   Data Analysis

The method of data analysis I have choose for this study is qualitative content analysis method. In qualitative study of this nature, the data analysis is aimed to objectively and in a systematic way analyze the acquired data in order to be able to establish a clear reflection about the study, without losing the content of the gathered information. Qualitative data analysis seeks to bring order through processing the structure and meaning of the quantity of collected data. Qualitative data analysis seeks to search for general statements about the relationships among categories of data in ''the ways in which the research moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why is the case the case'' (Hitchcock and Huges 1995, 295). In many social researches the use of content analysis can be applied in many settings. Content analysis method can be good as it can help when researching other studies to help compare what has been omitted and what further needs to be researched (Vonk et al. 2006, 124).

Also, another research says that ''this research approach helps to analyze the points of view in people'' which is directly the point of my research work: to ascertain and compare the perceptions of ageing from two cultural points of view. Undeniably, it is the ultimate goal of every researcher to gain different points of views (Oakley, Williams & Popay 1999, 72).

In analyzing interviews, content analysis method proved the best method since it helped in analyzing conversations that took place during the interview process. Qualitative content analysis method allowed me to classify the information I have received into different topics which I can disseminate more in detail. This method helps to organize masses of text into various categories to be able to construct different themes of entities that are more connected to the theoretical background. Qualitative content analysis helps to understand the phenomena under study of the voice of the informants through the given information. After the text examination, the content analysis method will provide help to better and clearer see the trend subjects and also help the reader when comparing this study to other studies (Dan & Kalof 2008, 105).

Content data analysis is a suitable way to make meaning of texts, more especially unstructured information. The data analysis of this study was solely aimed to provide interpretation, classification and combine the gathered information during the interview process. Logical analysis and conclusion has been followed in categorizing the research data into themes. The focus of this data analysis in this study is not solely dependent on theory proving, but the study seeks to find a way to provide illustration of the acquired data to give reflection of the participants' experiences (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Authentic citations from the informants appear in this research report to provide a sign of reliability and also to raise readers' interest to read the report (Neuendorf, 2002).

The purpose of the researcher is to work with the data to seek to provide a systematic search for new meanings and information's (Hatch 2002, 148). My aim to use the content analysis method as researcher is to seek to understand and interpret the data of the informants. The data will later be put into abstract to form a wider picture of the phenomenon. Hence, the result of the research work will be a discourse to provide solidification of the participants' answers to understand ageing from their cultural perspective and provide new information found through the content data analysis.
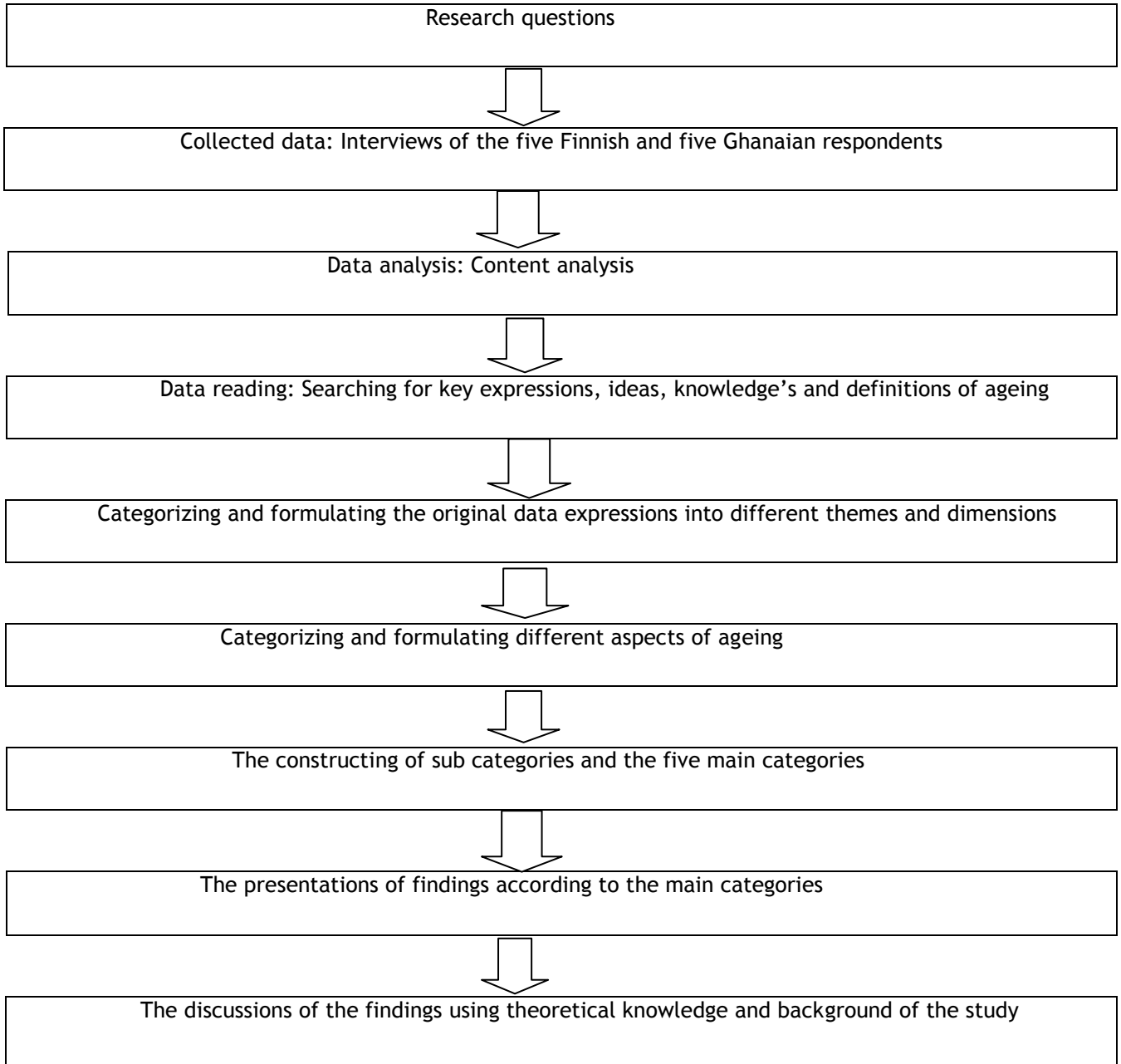
The interview data transcriptions were done to provide accuracy to serve the context of the participants' given experiences. The recorded interview was listened repeatedly in a sole attempt to discover any recurring feature of the talk organized which was not noted in the previous listening. Interview transcription involves a level of interpretation and more careful selection, but not to be assumed as detail writing of texts recorded before the main business of analysis (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). The data in a text version was revealed thoroughly to create familiarization and to come out with a more clear understanding in line with the respondents' responses. Careful reading of the transcribed interview data was very necessary because it made it easy in reducing the data into a way in which the information which is irrelevant is totally separated from the relevant ones for the study (Hitchcook and Hughes, 1995).

The relevant data was extracted from the interview from the bulk of information which was done by looking for repeated themes or expressions from the responses that described the respondents' ageing thoughts, ideas, knowledge's and experiences. The original thoughts, ideas, experiences and expressions in the data were carefully examined for original expressions and then organized into similarities and differences. This was done to solicit the common meanings in order to provide simplified expressions, to name and categorize the contents respectively. The data under study was grouped into categories and sub categories, which were created through interpretation of the contents of the sentences acquired from the data transcribed. The responses of the informants were thoroughly compared with each other severally and were put in the rightful category.

Categories were then formed after the comparing. Five main categories were then formed based on the sub-categories after the data compilations. The data was arranged under the themes human ageing, mental health, pensions, generational conflict and services for the elderly. This was done because looking and reading the data critically and carefully there were similarities in the respondents answers. All the data cut across each other in way that, it was appropriate to categorize them as such based on the data gathered.

4.4   The Study Implementation

The process of the study can be seen in the figure below:

Research questions

⬇

Collected data: Interviews of the five Finnish and five Ghanaian respondents

⬇

Data analysis: Content analysis

⬇

Data reading: Searching for key expressions, ideas, knowledge's and definitions of ageing

⬇

Categorizing and formulating the original data expressions into different themes and dimensions

⬇

Categorizing and formulating different aspects of ageing

⬇

The constructing of sub categories and the five main categories

⬇

The presentations of findings according to the main categories

⬇

The discussions of the findings using theoretical knowledge and background of the study

5   **Findings**

The findings of this research work have been arranged into a five main category that illustrates the different aspects of ageing from the study. The data gathered from the informants however overlap each other. Similar answers and ideas were expressed about ageing from both informants where few differences were also recorded and later outlined from the data formulation.

The five main aspects gathered from the findings are; human ageing, mental health, pensions, generational conflict, and services for the elderly.

The findings are presented in the figure below:
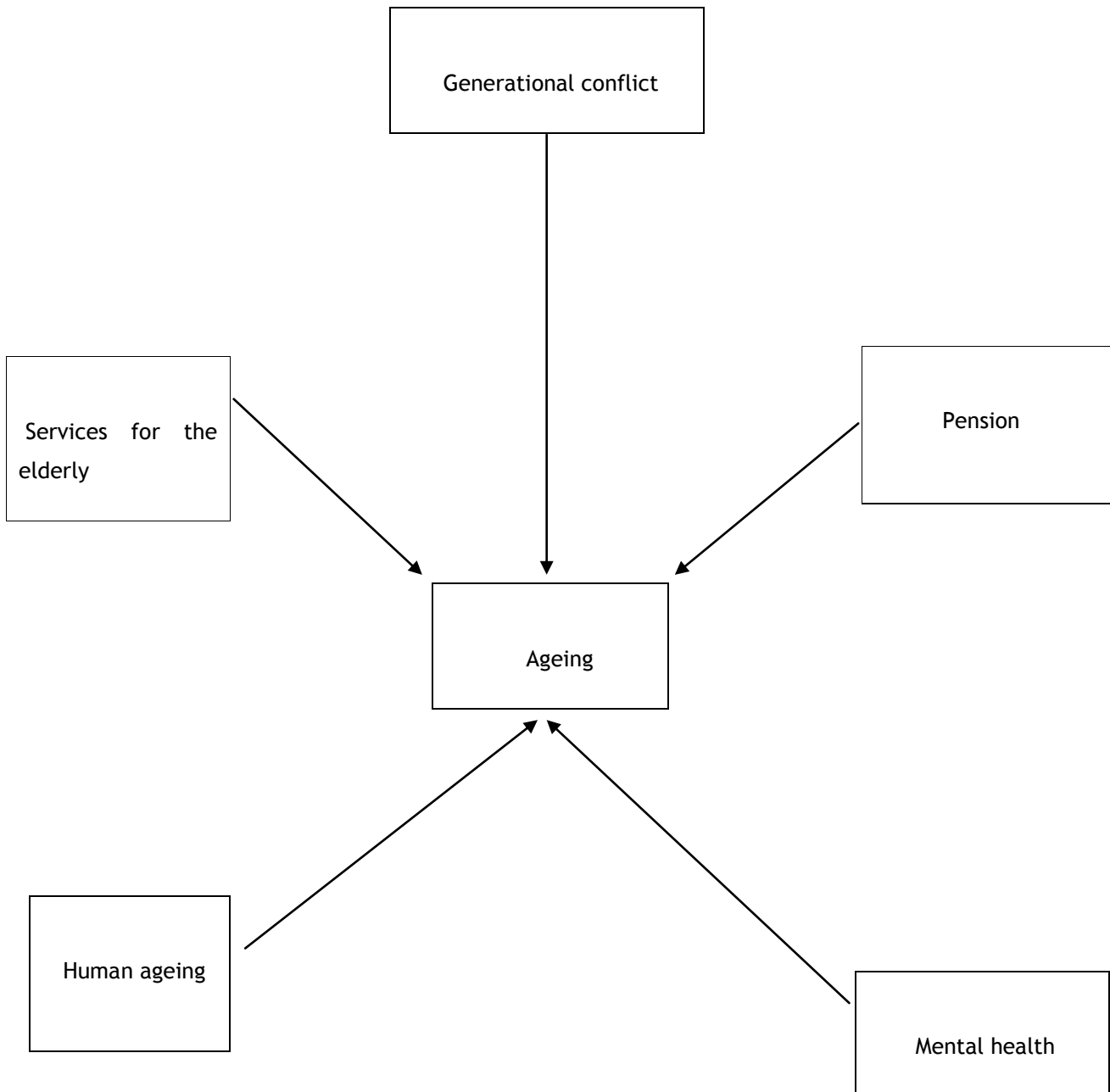
5.1 Finns perception of ageing

Generally, Finnish people did not tend to see ageing in a very positive way. The data gathered from the informants' shows the concerns they have about ageing and their ageing population. The informants however expressed great joy in having the opportunity to contribute their opinions on the subject matter as it is a major concern in Finland and Europe.

5.1.1 Human Ageing

The oxford dictionary defines ageing to be ''the process of getting old'' (Oxford dictionary). The process of human ageing was something that was defined similarly by the interviewees as the natural human process of growing from birth to old age. Ageing is a universal, progressive and intrinsic process that every human undergoes in the stages of human development (Jose Vina 2007, 249).

''Ageing is something no one can evade unless they are dead. When people are ageing, many things happen at the same time. After all ageing is part of life''

''It is the process that makes our bodies age and finally we die when the time comes''

EXPERIENCE IN OLD AGE

Old age can be a time to have a greater and diverse experience in life. Older people feel they have gone through the journey of life and therefore have idea of most of subjects under discussion in society. They mostly know what is right from wrong. How they perceive life is totally different from how the younger generation perceives life. It can mark a greater time of accumulation of life experiences and ideas. Human ageing can naturally be a great experience in life. In the process of human ageing people undergoes through different life challenges which gives people a broader outlook of life.

''Ageing is also a process in our minds that cumulates all our life experiences. An aged person is more experienced and wise in some things than younger people who do not have as much experiences''

''During ageing, vitality and activity diminishes but understanding increases''

LIFE SATISFACTION

Looking back from ones past life, there is always the feeling at the end of the day about how satisfaction life achievements could be. People grab experiences in their ageing ways but how about the accountability for good or bad satisfaction. Mistakes are corrected, new experiences are gathered and long term positive or negative changes are made and feel at the end of an ageing period.

''An aged person collect experiences, make mistakes and learn''

''Elderly people have lots of life experience''

OLDER PERSON

The World Health Organization defines old age as ''the age of 60 or 65 years roughly equivalents to the retirement ages in most developed countries'' (WHO). The Finnish informants define an elderly person closely as defined by the World Health Organization.

''Statistically anyone who is over 65 years old is an elderly person''

''I would say that an elderly person is someone over 65 years of age''

''Someone who is more than 75 years of age''

All these attest that ageing is a natural phenomenon and process where every human being undergoes after birth. It is a process where some people succeed in going through till old age but others fail to reach it through the journey of life. Ageing is therefore a great life experience and long journey in life.

A CHILD AND OLD PERSON

Ageing gives way for transition between different age groups. Society has way of determining life expectations and conceptions for different age group. A child is seen as someone who has not much societal expectation. A youth is someone who is considered as successors of older generations. An older person is seen as someone who has live a life with full of experiences in life. Hence, societal concerns and expectations for different age groups are differing.

''Physically they are opposites of each other but mentally the same. To feel good they both need care, help, support, attention and tenderness''

YOUTH AND OLD PERSON

There are little differences between these age groups. A youth and an old person have similar characteristics. Age identifies various kinds of people in different ways.

''Health usually, way of life, values, educational background (usually young people are generally better educated than older ones here in Finland), age of course, culture and interests in general because our age defines us in many way''

FEAR OF DEATH

It is a great experience to grow old. It gives the chances to be independent. It also begins a period of social and economical responsibilities on people. Well as people grow older and at the old age period, people begins to embrace the feeling of death around them. It is inevitable last stop of human ageing process. This thought of it creates a harder feeling within people as they age.

''Ageing is getting older''

5.1.2 Mental Health

The World Health Organization defines health to be 'the complete state of general wellness in mental, physical and social wellbeing and not particularly the exclusion of disease' (WHO). Mental health related illness during the process of old age is a big challenge to the process of ageing in humans.

''Ageing of our bodies can sometimes have an effect on the minds of older people and lose their memory and experiences''

''Ageing causes mental deterioration as people making them prone to various mental illnesses''

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Old age comes with a lot of behavioural problems. When people are not satisfy with their lives, when people cast their mind back to see the chances and wasted opportunities, when people think about the decisions they have made and how it has affected their lives brings either satisfaction or regret. In the latter stages or during old age, all this mentioned situations can account to the numerous problems which accounts to mental health related illness during old age. When life satisfaction is not met, there is always the feeling of regret and denial. As people think and mourn their losses they develop all kinds of mental illness when they become depressed and feel guilty. When the feeling of what should have been made right but was not sets in, it creates hatred and this emanates various forms of psychological problems in old age.

In the latter part of adolescent life, the common mental health problems identified are mostly anxiety disorder and depression. ''Depression affects 10-15% of persons over 65 years'' (Mental Health in Older People).

5.1.3 Pension

Pensions help to provide financial security in old age (City of Helsinki). During retirement people receive money as source of income to support their lives. This is a Social Security System in countries which are predominant form of old age pension coverage.

''Someone has to pay the pensions of the retired people and those are the people in working age. But when the retired-working age people rate is bad, it makes many difficulties for the common welfare of Finland and the pension system as well''

ECONOMICAL EMPATHY

The question of how to generate adequate sources of money to take proper care of older people across the nation is a great concern. Yes! How easy can this be? How the social systems can manages to deal with adequate pension provisions, care deliveries are still questions to deliberate on.

How can the active working generation then cope with this? Perhaps it is a question that can linger in the minds of all stakeholders as there would be the need to plan adequately and in advance to meet the challenges of this in the future.

''I have a great concern about how to take good care of the ageing population. Is there enough money to give as pensions and good care''

ECONOMICAL CAPABILITY

A press release by the states Minister Risikko says that ''Finland need for a clear line of action on how to develop Finnish society so that we can secure in a sustainable way socially and economically as comprehensive welfare and wellbeing as possible for the ageing population'' (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2012). Statistics showed that in Finland, 3.6 million people have been insured for earnings-related pension benefits. This figure was recorded during the end of the year 2010 where the age group is within 18 and 68 years (Finnish Center for Pensions). About 2.4 million were employed where every sixth person insured for the earnings-related pension benefits which is 594,000 together got some form of pension based on their work history by the end of the year 2010 (Finnish Center for Pensions).

LOW BIRTH RATE - LOW DEATH RATE

When birth and death rates are low, there are greater chances of feeling of concern about generating labor forces to work. Low birth rate in Finland and improvement in technology has resulted in reduction in death rate which has increase in the number of people ageing together at the same time.

''In my country Finland, I am really considered about ageing because there will be less and less young people living in this country and more and more elderly people. Basically, this means that age structure is changing little by little. This development can bring many threats to our country. When there will be more people on pension than working the social benefits expenses will sky rocket''

5.1.4   Generational conflict

Generational conflict develops in one way for example when a country's population is greatly aged and the younger generations feels worried as to working to pay for retirees and also raises concern as to how to receive their benefits and enjoy their lives during their period of old age.

CHANGE

Generational conflict arises as a result of adjusting a lower fertility and mortality rates across nations. Population ageing raises greater lines of conflict in societies between the elderly and the younger generation in situations where people live longer and have fewer children. The decrease in the number of the aged in societies has raised greater concern (Schulz J-H.2000, 286).

''I am looking forward to the retirement of these so called age groups so that I could have better job opportunities''

TIME

The younger people see themselves differently from their elderly population. This is because elderly people consider themselves as different generation from that of the younger people. This means of viewing each other brings greater generational differences and conflicts between the elderly people and younger people.

''The population of Finland is getting older and older all the time because the birth rate has declined for many decades already''

Struggle between generations, change in societal demands, expectation and changes in life styles of different age groups constitute a great level of struggle/conflict between generations.

''Younger people have grown up with computers and internets whiles elderly people aware not to have had that. Younger people have different taste in movies, music and clothing contrarily to the taste of elderly people''

AGEISM

It is clear that younger generations' expectations can be very different and societal rejection of older people gives them a sense of unworthiness. Rejection and time constrain due to age barriers can be very demean which makes older people feel much worried with the passage of time.

''The passage of time is a difficult transition to accept in real life. Casting my eyes back to the life when I was a youth and to my present age as an old person life brings a lot of memories especially when I see the development and advancement of easiness of present life compared to our youthful generation where most things today would have been impossible to do''

5.1.5   Services for the elderly

There are different forms of services available to elderly people to help sustain their lives and promote their basic human rights to the right of life. These services are rendered as enshrined in the old age policies in Finland which aims to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of the older people.

ECONOMICAL CAPACITY

As people age, it comes with a lot of responsibilities of all stakeholders in Finland to work to promote their self independencies. Possibly how to generate a greater source of funding to take care of the greater ageing Finnish population is a great question to ask. How can a young ageing population work to generate adequate source of money to provide and give adequate care to this ageing population.

Hence the economical capacity of the state becomes a source to probe to see if it can have the strength to meet the needs of this entire ageing people.

''A great concern to me about our ageing population is whether there is enough source of fund to take good care of the aged by providing them with the needed good services''

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE SERVICES

As people age there is a lot of pressure on health and social care deliverers, policy makers and all stakeholders. Age people are part of the society. The pressure that will be met in taking care of aged people are very detrimental and a greater concern for the need to train more personnel's in this field to help give proper care and ease a lot struggles on the health and social care available facilities.

''Health care might face some difficulties because ageing population normally has more health issues than younger people. I am thinking about how the national economy can continue to support the care of our large aged population''

5.2 Ghanaians perception of ageing

In a more general way, Ghanaians informants express concern about ageing not in a negative way either. They did seem to be also concern about ageing as a global phenomenon.

5.2.1 Human ageing

The definition of ageing by the Ghanaian informants helps to talk about how they see the process of ageing to be. Ageing is a process of growth where humans have to undergo through in life. Every human being undergoes through the process of ageing from the onset of birth. Starting from been a baby, to a toddler, to boy, a teen, an adult and older person

''Ageing is the biological process of growing older or the biological changes that occurs in all living things''

IRREVERSIBILITY OF AGEING

The ageing process is an irreversible process where no man can evade. It is biological and natural in process. Every human being undergoes ageing. Through the process of ageing, people grow through the life cycles from stages to stages. Old age is a period where life satisfaction can be seen as been good or bad.

''It is a constant, predictable process that involves growth and development of living organisms''

''Ageing is growing old''

SOCIO-CULTURAL RESPONSIBILITY IN AGEING

Throughout the life process of ageing, society has expectations about certain age groups. For example, getting married and having a family.

''As you age about 30years, you have to responsible. Example: marrying, having a family''

ELDERLY PERSON

Different people perceive ageing from different points of view. Ageing is a universal, progressive and intrinsic process that every human undergoes in the stages of life development (Jose Vina 2007, 249). The ages of 60 and 65 years are often used despite its arbitrary nature (World Health Organization).

''A person from the age of 60 years and above''

IDENTITY IDENTIFICATION

Different people have various numerical figures by which they use to identify people as to been a child, a teen, an adult and an elderly person. This numerical numbers differ mostly from society to society. A clear cut number has not been universally accepted as the main number used to describe who an elderly person is. Maybe from the age of fifty years, people can be seen as been elderly already.

''A person who is above 50 or 55 years of age''

''A person of age above 60 years''

The concept of ageing has no universally acceptable clear cut definition. The oxford dictionary defines ageing to be 'the process of getting old'' (Oxford dictionary). Society has various characteristics for branding different age groups. Words like respect, grown and experiences are used to categorize older people. It is difficult to say that a child has an experience because society feels a child does not know anything in life. When people pass through the journey and transition in ages in life, they are well branded as older people.

''An old person is someone who is grown and has experiences in life''

A CHILD AND OLD PERSON

Society has different expectations and concern for different age groups. The perceptions for different age groups have a deep root in societal conceptions.

''They are different in years, life experience but may be similar in terms of physical weakness''

YOUTH AND OLD PERSON

A youth and an old person have similar characteristics but with little differences.

''Age, physical strength''

FEAR OF DEATH

Ageing marks the point where people begin to fear 'death' as the next point to go into after been old. It also marks time to rest from all the journey of struggles in the world a man passes through right from birth.

''I know that after growing old, I will in a day die''

5.2.2 Mental health

Mental illness during old age is a predominant characteristic of old age. Usually, a lot of older people suffer from various kinds of mental illness which impairs their body functions. This varied form of mental illness impedes older people's ability to function and contribute to society's demands.

MENTAL ILLNESS

It is an undeniable fact about how society stereotypes older people as been the main class of people with mentally illness mostly or been mentally depreciated. It is however clear to say that mental illness does not only affect elderly people but affects all age groups.

''Older people mostly suffer from various forms of mental depreciation''

HEALTH RELATED SICKNESS

Old age marks a transition point where the human body cells that fight against various forms of sickness in the body become no longer active to deal with the many kinds of diseases the human body is exposed to. As people age, their immune systems becomes readily weak and this prevail greater chances of been attack with all kinds of diseases which makes it easier to brand aged people as people with health related problems. Health related sickness varies from physical, mental to psychological.

''Ageing posses a lot of health challenges''

''Old age gives way to all forms of disorders and diseases to be deal with''

Generally, younger people feel happier more in their lives than older people who happens to feel less happy. This raises a greater concern about happiness and life satisfaction between all age groups. In the course of people's lives, varied circumstances differ variably hence the differences in their level of emotional wellbeing in general. The ability to cope and enjoy life, have a healthy self esteem, the ability to interact with people and have a greater chance to look greatly into the future with optimism are the way to define ''emotional wellbeing'' of a person (Bailey & Shooter 2009, 154).

''I am not really concerned with my age now as I am happier''

5.2.3   Pension

Adequate source of lasting finances during old age is very important to life satisfaction during old age. It is always a great misery to find a lot of older people suffering from financial hardships since they are unable to engage in active working life.

> ''Low or no pension provision for elderly people''

INFORMATION STORAGE

It is notably clear how difficult it is when after a long service, older people begin to have difficulties in receiving their pension money from the state. This presumably causes a lot of stress and worries about how to generate the needed information to help them get through with their 'pension money'. Lack of adequate information keeping and storage makes life difficult for people when they are retired and need financial support to live a sustainable life.

> ''Adequate means of keeping records and information to make easy access to pension money during old age''

Older people in Africa always face a lot of challenges, the major been economic exclusion, denial of employment and access to insurance and credit schemes. They also face discrimination due to age by means of social exclusion and change in roles and practices within their families (Help Age International). The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) and the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) give recommendations for member states in Africa to provide social pensions to older people to help boost their lives (Help age International 2008).

GOOD PENSION POLICIES

Pension policies are laid down to help provide adequate source of financial security to older people during their old age era. It is quite difficult as only people in active working civil services mostly benefit from this pension money. Majority of the older population would have to find their own means of financial sources of security if they are not in active working civil services. These older people are mostly catered for my by their immediate families where as some do menial jobs to survive.

> ''Good pension policies are needed for older people and at old age''

Notwithstanding, to safeguard the financial crisis older people go into during old age; there is the need to make good and adequate reforms and policies about pensions for older people.

5.2.4   Generational conflict

Ageing pose a great challenge to generations over resources distribution. Ageing contains elements of high social and political problems. The imposing of huge amount of tax burdens on workers to help pay for retirees has generate a lot of controversies in conflicts within generations.   The term 'burden' used here

refer to the distribution of pensions, cost of health care for example medical costs have a great root in nation's population change structure (Schulz J-H.2000, 284).

OPPORTUNITIES

Perhaps older people are seen by the younger generations as barriers to their chances of developing themselves and life esteems. Younger generations sees themselves as their time to control the affairs of the country and have better job opportunities which are not been met hence creating a source of conflict between the older and the younger age groups.

''I would like the old to fade out so work becomes available to me or to the younger generation''

The generational conflict emanates in society when there a lot of aged people who are still in active working life. This creates low job opportunities to the younger generation who thinks that they have to have all the good things in life such as good homes, cars, better jobs, been in managerial positions contrary to the branded 'older generation'. This creates a lot of generational conflict. There are also concerns where there is rise in older population; it creates a lot of challenges to the federal government's ability to provide adequate social security to the people during retirements.

''Throughout people's careers at about 65 years, it is the social security systems established by the federal government to provide pensions. This social security will be in jeopardy as the percentage of retired people increases''

CHANGE

It could be the time for change since younger generation considers themselves as been in the twenty-first century. Time has passed away and ageing is creating great hindrances to their chances in succeeding in their various careers.

5.2.5 Services for the elderly

The majority of older people in Africa live in the rural areas where there are fewer or no services available for them to access (Help Age International 2008). The informants expressed a great concern for the need for their country to provide varied forms of adequate sources of services for their elderly populations during old age.

INSTITUTIONALISE CARE CENTERS

As people age, caring for them becomes a 'burden' on younger people and on their immediate families to give care and assistance. This is a typical situation in Ghana and like in all other African countries. When people age they rely on their children to give them care. The need has therefore arisen that, the state puts a lot of adequate measures to put up care centers to care for people when they age.

''Lack of care and lack of care facilities' for example old people's home, elderly care workers''

''With a large proportion of the population over the age 65, medical care must become better equipped to deal with the disorders and diseases of the elderly''

HEALTH CARE FOR AGED PEOPLE

The need has arisen for the acquisition of health care practitioners who will take care of people when they are old. It is a great pity to see old people struggling with younger people queuing to receive health care. Government must train health care deliverers who will take care of aged people to give a little bit of life satisfaction for older people.

''Need for improve health care for the ageing population''

NEGLIGENCE OF OLDER PEOPLE

There have been over the year's greater and devastating social, health, economic and psychological effects on older people in Africa (Help Age International 2008).

''Older people are mostly physically depreciated''

ELDERLY CARE WORKERS

Since elderly people are always in need of care and services, the need has arisen to have trained elderly care workers who will work to promote the self independencies of elderly people. Most of older people in Ghana depend on their grandchildren to run errands for them. Those who are not fortunate to live with their grandchildren's have to run errands for themselves. It is therefore necessary and needed that people are trained in elderly care work to take care of older people in care homes.

''Older people are always in need of services and errands''

6.   Discussions

Finally, this study will gear towards the seeking of a clearer and deeper meaning for the findings gathered from the data. Ethical aspect and trustworthiness will be taking into consideration for this study setting. Lastly, I have also compiled some Ghanaian and Finnish proverbs about ageing to solidify how these two cultures talk about ageing.

In this thesis work, I studied the perception of ageing from two cultural points of view. In this study qualitative research method was used in carrying out the research work. The responses of the informants were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method. It was the aim of the study to give the chance to both Ghanaians residing in Finland and Finnish native speaking people in Finland, the opportunity to express their views and concerns on ''ageing''. The findings during the data analysis were divided into five main categories: human ageing, mental health related in old age, pension during old age as social security, generational conflict between generations and services for elderly people. I realized surprisingly that there were quite a lot of similarities in the answers of the two informants.

Interestingly, it was at times that the presuppositions of the Ghanaians about the Finns ageing were quite wrong and the other way around. Both informants used words and expressions such as pension, care, respect, experience, life journey, responsibility, mental, physical, conflict that ageing can bring into life. They also expressed that ageing has resulted in a lot of achievement for their countries. They made mention of how their older generations have fought and work hard to seek their freedom of rule from colonialism and therefore there should be a more reason to respect elderly people/senior citizens.

The similarities deducted from the data are outlined in detail below:

To begin with, I found from the findings that, there were similarities in the two perceptions of ageing expressed by both informants. The Ghanaian respondents' definitions of ageing were quite similar as was defined by the Finnish informants. All the definitions were given about the process of growth in a man's life which is biological in nature and irreversible. The cultural perception of ageing as was defined by the Finnish respondents was directly in line with the Western point of view about ageing such as been a biological process of growth. They went on to define ageing mostly taking into account that it's a growth process where a lot of life experiences are gathered in the process of ageing. In a nutshell it is part of human life that cannot be escaped. Ageing comes both in positive and negative way. Human ageing was defined not in a negative way as it is mostly stereotyped. Human ageing is seen as a positive aspect of a man's life where individuals get the chance to live an independent life through stages of transition. Ageing is not a singular process, biologically, sociologically and physically humans' age. The ageing experience is determined by unique interactions between these various clocks (Samuel, 2011).

Secondly, there is no universally acceptable age limit by which a person is classified as an elderly person. I find out from the data that the age of about 60 years were given by both informants as the age by which they would classify a person to be an elderly person. The World Health Organization defines old age as ''the age of 60 or 65 years roughly equivalents to the retirement ages in most developed countries'' (WHO). The Finnish and Ghanaian informants define and classify an elderly person closely as it is done by the World Health Organization. This can be seen as such that, both cultures sees people at the age of about 60 years and above to be an elderly person which is in-line with the World Health Organization's definition of old age or an elderly person. Ageing is use to describe and identify people in varied ways.

Thirdly, the data I gathered showed that both informants expressed mental health and health problems as similar characteristics of ageing or old age. It is a transition which has a lot of health related problems during the ongoing process. I identified that both informants talked about the physical and health depreciation status of people as they age. Physical depreciation problems such walking deficiency and wrinkles in the face were gathered from the data which was used to describe the characteristics of elderly people. Health depreciation problems like mental health related sicknesses such as dementia, depression, hearing impairment and anxiety or about death were made out from the data. In the latter part of adolescent life, the common mental health problems identified are mostly anxiety disorder and depression. ''Depression affects 10-15% of persons over 65 years'' (Mental Health in Older People).

To add to, the Finnish informants expressed concern about the lasting ability of pension provision as financial security availability during old age. In categorizing who an elderly person is, one key characteristics identified in the data was about 'pension' during retirement from active work as a way of talking and describing an elderly person. One informant described an elderly person as people on pension. Pension provision also raised a similar concern expressed by both informants. The Finnish respondents expressed a key concern about the guarantee of pension provision during old age in Finland and how this will affect their economy as their population is ageing fast. The Ghanaian respondents on the other hand express concern for the need of adequate pension schemes and reforms to help take care of all people during old age as a source of financial security.

Lastly, I found out from the data that both the informants of the younger generation of today have less concerns of ageing. The younger respondents of both cultures said they have a lot of life to live and hence do not attach much importance to age. The concern they raised were particularly about their inability to get proper job offers or places since there are a lot of older people in working life. The only slight concern was that the old people will make way to give them better job possibilities and life.

The differences as was deducted from the data are outline below:

By comparison, the Finnish informants expressed high concern about the source of funding for the provision of adequate elderly care services to their populations. This corresponds to the Ministry of Social and Health Services publication which stated that ''the Finnish ageing population is a biggest challenge to the social protection funding, its sustainability and the safe-guarding of the availability of social and health services'' (Ministry of Social and Health Services, 2008). On the other hand, the Ghanaian informants expressed concern about the need for the provision of adequate elderly care services or care facilities for their ageing population as it exist in the western world.

Also, the Finnish informants again expressed a great concern about the availability of adequate lasting source of funding for pensions to be provided to them during their old age since they are contributing to the payment of 'pension money' to their ageing population. Meanwhile the Ghanaian informants expressed concern about the need to put adequate pension reforms and laws to safeguard the financial crisis of people during old age as there are low pension provisions which are only available to civil servants and also available to only individuals' own private pension's plans or schemes. This perhaps raises concern of generational conflict between generations of active working life from the Finnish point of view.

Additionally, the Ghanaian informants expressed that they have less concern about the ageing population in Finland. I assume the reason could be that the Finnish ageing population does not affect them as immigrants. Probably too they have no plans to live permanently in Finland. However they expressed concern about Ghana's ageing population such as pension provisions. One Ghanaian informant expressed the concern that, he would like the old to fade out so that work becomes available to him or the younger generation in Finland. However the Finnish informants expressed concern about how to take care of their ageing population. One informant said there is the duty and responsibility to help and take care.

Contrarily, whereas the Ghanaian informants expressed the cultural challenges that come with ageing as one grows such as the young respecting the elderly in ways such as been polite to them, offering them care and nurture, seeking guidance and counseling from the them etc. The Finnish informants however expressed less concern about the cultural way of dealing with older people. One informant said senior citizens are retired and they are no longer useful for society as they cannot make decisions. People do not become useful as they grow old in the Finnish point of view. This perhaps can be seen that, ageing gives way for newer generation to take on the mandate of running the day to day affairs of their society. It can also be deducted that the cultural points of view of the two cultures have quite different way about how culturally they value an elderly person. When people age, they cannot make decisions any longer to affect themselves, their families and the society at large according to the Finns informant's point of view.

On the light of the similarities and differences in the data outlined above, I found interestingly that there was a kind of cultural mini analysis that the respondents made whiles defining ageing. The biological theoretical knowledge of ageing was what was used by both informants in defining ageing. This perhaps props the pre-knowledge idea of how each of the culture sees ageing as a biological process of growth of all human beings. Ageing was described as a growing process in life where a lot of issues happen at the same time. These issues vary accordingly in life such. I do not think this was intentional as it appeared in all the definitions by both informants. This certainly shows that both cultures already have a lot of ideas of the general conception of human ageing.

A culture may be referred to as a shared, integrated pattern of ways of thought and action that is transmitted from generation to generation over periods of time (Lull 2000, 54). Both informants expressed the cultural value of how they broadly look at older people. They both describe them as people with a lot of life experiences as they have gone through a long journey in life. Words like wise, responsible, experience etc are typical ways of seeing an older person in their societies. As a result of this, the need to give them respect when dealing with them is paramount in their societies.

Again, it was clear from the data that one characteristics of ageing as was outlined by both informants were the pre-conceived ideas of mental health problems associated to people as they age and particularly older people. This sets a lot of constraints faced by elderly people in modern societies in varied forms such as job seeking, socialization etc. The conception and images attached to old age are all culturally constructed and hence relational; they could be or at the least should be different. This could be probably as a result of how mental health related problems accounts for high economic burden on society because mental health disorders are common illness in old age. They causes the induction of functional disability, causes burden on health system, causes disturbances in rehabilitation and generally impair the quality of life of old people, their relatives and the society in general (Mental Disorders in Old Age). I assume that the reason why my informants raised pension provision to categorize people termed as older people as outlined as one of the key characteristics of ageing was partly with the fact that elderly people are considered to be no longer active in working life and they depend on pension provisions as sources of financial help to enable them to continue to live their lives.

It is a societal and culturally stereotyped preconceived idea that people on pension are aged and perhaps no longer active in society. Therefore anybody taking 'pension money' is branded as older person or aged.

I made it out from the data that, ageing serves as a tool for identity identification between age groups. The respondents clearly stated how difference in generations can cause a tool for identifying people in society. It is always clear to see how people identify others by way of describing them using their age. This is undeniably clear how society uses age groups in making out people in life. A child is seen as someone who needs help in various ways likewise old person. Ageing sets a criteria and standard in how people view or considers an individual to be. A youth and an old person have similar characteristics with the little difference been their age group. Concisely, ageing helps to identify people from each other, one generation from the other generation. It serves as a tool for human identification and forms part of human existence.

I spotted clearly from the data that, there is a great generational conflict between age groups as a result of ageing. Most of my interviewees conducted their message of 'change'. This was used in a way to describe the different ageing generations on a societal level. This raises the issue of ageism which is used to describe how different generations describe their age inferior to others. Ageing poses a lot of struggles between different age groups. These struggles were clearly outlined in the realm that, whiles the younger generation are seeking to have their fare share of the nation's cake been in various sectors for example as in having a better employment, living a luxurious life, having good finances and been in control in the realm of affairs whereas ageing sets as a constrain to their been able to have the 'best' as was termed.

Again, the imposing of huge amount of tax burdens on workers to help pay for retirees has generate a lot of controversies in conflicts within generations. The term 'burden' used here refers to the distribution of pensions, cost of health care for example medical costs have a great root in nation's population change structure (Schulz J-H.2000, 284). Providing sufficiently for people's retirement period is a very expensive preposition. As a result of the declining of the continuity of the aged, the fulfilling of providing people with income and services for a period of time outside the working labor force provides a huge generational conflict. The need will therefore arise for the hiring of more foreign workers into Finland to work to generate funds to sustain the economy and the social system to take care of pension provisions.

I also deducted from the data that when birth and death rates are low, there are greater chances of feeling concern about generating labor forces to work for the ageing population. When there is more active youthful working population, they serve as sources of money generation for the people and the country. Improvement in technology has resulted in low birth rates, low death rates, and increases in the number of people ageing together at the same time. In such situations, there are fewer younger active generations to work like in Finland to take care of people under working class and the aged. Ageing then pose a great challenge to generations over resources distribution because it contains elements of high social and political problems.

This is because people have developed expectations that retirement period should be an enjoyable time of life and as that the economic resources available should be enough to avoid limitations imposed on retirement periods by financial scarcity of money and shortage of credits of a country during retirement period (Schulz J-H.2000, 292).

To add to, the human ageing process is twined in society's social and economical problems that come with it. It is easy to see how people have to be responsible for their own actions and thoughts as they age. As one ages' it becomes a great and difficult experience to see how satisfaction life has been. Either in a positive or negative way, ageing comes with a lot challenges, tasks and responsibilities. The feeling of loss and gains causes a great way for people to reflect on their life which increases the psychological process the human brain undergoes. As people weigh how satisfied they are in life, they become satisfy for using the opportunities they had well or perhaps feeling of guilty grips their thoughts and minds of the negative decisions they have made and how it has affected their lives. The data clearly drew up how this implication accounts to ageing. The chances that are gone cannot be undone. The lost cannot be retrieved. This feeling of loss creates a lot of psychological effects which makes aged people depress and sometimes they become prone to all forms of psychological illness. It eventually leads people into all kinds of mental depreciation as they age.

Nonetheless, all the participants expressed great concern about adequate service provision for the ageing population across their countries. In Finland, there are a lot of institutions that provide various services to older people in various ways. The Ghanaian informants expressed a great concern for the need of service provision for their elderly population. It is clearly to see that, Ghanaians like all other African countries used their immediate family members in taking care of their elderly population. Most of the elderly people in the Ghanaian society work in different forms to support their immediate family members such as baby sitting their grand children to enable their mothers go to work. The Ghanaian respondents expressed a greater concern for the need for their government to establish institutionalized care centers where elderly people can be sent to and taken care of as in Western worlds.

The issue of adequate elderly care provisions in Finland were also mentioned by the Finnish informants as a key concern of worry about their ageing population as there would be the need to have adequate finances to take proper care of elderly people across Finland as the country is also gradually growing into a more multi-cultural society. The ability of the Finnish economy to sustain this adequate care provision is a question that worries them. The human ageing process comes with both the social, economical and political concerns. The social aspects deduced from both data deals with aspects of societal expectations of certain behavioural patterns for all age groups. The economical aspects deal with the financial aspects ageing places on the individual, the family circle and the society at large. Whereas the political aspect of ageing deals with the national concern ageing places on governments, policy planners, policy makers and all stakeholders to work to promote the self independencies of all age groups across the state. Population ageing has been among the successes of mankind but it is also the biggest growing challenges together with its economical, social and political side effects (World Health Organization).

Generally, the ageing process is biological in nature. It has social, physical and psychological constituents which make up the human ageing process. The ageing process is very important as it gives different avenues and various challenges humans have to undergo. I deducted from the data about the social responsibilities that goes with active ageing from the Ghanaian data. It was deducted that as people age, culturally they go with associated and expected responsibilities such as getting married, starting a family life and leading a more responsible life. I assume that it might have to do with their cultural expectations about ageing. Their values and traditions about a person's age and expectations were quite outlined in the data. This is perhaps their socio-cultural way of understanding ageing and its related issues.

It is the goal of this study to define and solicit for information about the global concept of ageing as to how different cultures perceive ageing. The questions for the research were constructed to help uncover the cultural perception of ageing from two cultural points of view. Like every theory, it is a key to a better understanding of the ageing process (Ebersole, Hess & Luggen 2004, 30). Hence the data stemming from this study can offer information in various angles to reflect the issue under study.

There were a lot of aspects emerged from the analysis that would been dealt with in more detail but was not possible for this study like the fact that people from nominal forms of society less from self esteem issues than those with lower socioeconomic status (Hooyman & Kiyak 2005, 2002-204). This study generally, helped to compare different perceptions of ageing taking into account the cultural backgrounds of the participants. Perceptions here refer to the ideas, knowledge and experiences. The findings clearly provide in-depth information about how different people view a phenomenon under study.

This study has practical and theoretical meanings. Constantly there are a lot of changes in our society and we therefore need a more and clearer understanding of ageing and its related issues to enable us give care. This can perhaps be useful to help clear the stereotypical idea about elderly people in a whole. It will also be useful to help social services students for example clear their pre-conceived ideas about working in elderly care service centers after graduation and serve as a boost for them to work in elderly care centers. To also seek boost young people's interest to work in elderly care centers to provide care.

A lot of societal issues such as working life demands, ideologies in healthy life living and lifelong learning styles are not straightly connected to ageing but they are really part of society's ageing complex phenomenon. Hence when studying ageing, there is the need to be aware of particular societal context and by reflecting on the events in our society, we can get more knowledge on the biological process of ageing. The theoretical implication of this research work can be described as a tool to deepen the understanding of ageing as highly life's personal experiences but which also has a societal relevance as well.

The data are quite interrelated, they both depicts the general issues surrounding ageing. It is really an important process in life but also quite difficult. Ageing experience becomes the platform for many new opportunities in life so as it marks a bigger time for making some very important steps and plans that can affect one's life positively or negatively in a long term.

It is relevant to reflect on how these findings can be related, understood and used in real life sectors. I am of the ultimate belief that, this study is able to provide some light on the state of the elderly and what ageing means to the two cultures on a whole. All the finding are related to the perspectives of people living in Finland and also are more related to ageing in the Finnish context. Having a greater understanding of these perceptions can in a way help in gaining some understanding of the past and the present to throw more light and create a better understanding of ageing across cultures on a more global level.

The findings of this research work can be linked to many previous researches that were presented in the framework of theory. I also think that this study managed to recover more information of the phenomenon by bringing forth the ideas, experiences and thoughts of the informants. I also see that, the study is a valuable contribution to other related studies that have given the chance to social service clients to air their views on the global concern of the worlds ageing pandemic. I am of the utmost belief that, the theoretical background and the method used for this study met the goal set. I however think that because of the limited number of respondents used, this study only grasps only a part of the issue of ageing. As result of this fact, I was more careful not to make a lot of the generalizations of the result.

This is perhaps not the goal of qualitative research either since each case is unique to consider more important than explaining (King et al. 1994, 3). Although the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can be seen as more idealistic to secure the reliability of the research I however noticed that qualitative approaches such as interviews approach method is capable to make the topic under study visible than what quantitative method would not reach. Using interviewing method did not just only make great nuances but it also made the collection of the data more interesting and opened up a lot of outcomes by giving the informants the chance to air their views on the study. This research work also served as a tool of empowerment for the informants by giving them the platform to air their views on the widely world express concern of ageing populations across the world. They data can only be assumed to be among the ideas, experiences, concerns and knowledge these two cultures have about ageing and how it affects their lives.

The study cannot be generalized but can be conclude that Finns and Ghanaians have similar and slightly different opinions about ageing. It is an information generation study undertaken to provide information to address the general concept of ageing. It is therefore my hope that this study would serve partly as information generation to help uncover the general perceptions of ageing across the globe in helping to address the aims of the project which seeks to define the global concept of ageing.

Again, a richer and greater understanding of ageing across cultures is very important to the provision of good and adequate social welfare service for Elderly people in the city of Espoo and across Finland in general. This is because of the rise of immigrant groups in Finland where majority of them are gradually ageing and would need the services of Elderly care workers to work to promote their self independent having a richer background of their understanding of ageing and how they express ageing in their own cultural knowledge and ideas.

It will also help to provide a tool to help to solidify the means of integration of immigrant groups such as the Ghanaian population into the Finnish society taking their cultural background knowledge and information of their ideas, knowledge and thoughts into concern.

This research study has enlightened and drawn my awareness about the topic under study. My personal thoughts about future studies on the broad topic is that, I strongly recommend a lot of researches to be carry out to ascertain various cultural perspectives of the elderly and ageing. The research findings have triggered my mind that there would be the need to research more about the societal and cultural conception of ageing. For the purpose to understand different cultural views for the sake of immigration of immigrants into the Finnish society, a proper and clear understanding can be sought when a lot of researches are conducted in order not to delimit the study of ageing only to the Western point of view as different cultures in the world have their own ideas, conceptions and experiences about the elderly, ageing and their ageing populations. This I am of the utmost belief will be beneficial to the Social Services and Nursing professions to help provide proper care and service delivery to their clients from different cultural backgrounds.

Elderly people can be understood on a more global view and proper care can be taken when working with elderly people from different cultural backgrounds. There is the need to make much attempt to ascertain the connection between the Western point of view of ageing, cultural understanding of ageing and the theoretical concepts of ageing. The findings of this study can help unveil different cultures perception of ageing contrary to the Finnish point of view. More of such researches will provide a better understanding of ageing from a more global perspective to help provide adequate policies and services to work in elderly care home or centers in Finland due to the rapid increase of immigrants into the Finnish society.

In this study, all my informants come from the Church of Pentecost and Finn-catering. The information they will give to me about the cultural perception of ageing will be handled in a strict and in confidential manner to uphold to all social workers' professional codes of practice to protect to the best interest of humans involved. The declaration of Helsinki in the year 1964 which helped to guide the ethical standards across the medical and social arena shares in common with the social workers' code of ethics (Bowling & Ebrahim 2005, 555). The ethical principles of autonomy, justice and beneficence were adhered to during the planning and implementation of this study since this kind of study has a great impact on the lives of people involved. During the interview phase, the researcher made sure to protect the confidentiality of the people been interviewed.

The interview participation was done on voluntary basis. The participants permission was seek to be interviewed and to sign a consent form. The questions for the interview were formulated in a simple way to foster easy understanding. Though consent forms were signed by the participants, it was clearly made to them that it was possible to withdraw from the study.

A contract of assurance was given to the informants to assure them that information given during the interviews would not be used against them in any way, and that the information's that will be obtained from them will be totally disposed off confidentially after the completion of study in particular.

The reason for the assurance was because before the interview, the respondents asked whether the information to be provided could have an impact on their perception of ageing or by any means have an effect on their identities. Presenting the findings of this study, for the purpose of client confidentiality, the names of the informants are not use. This is to treat the data for this study as anonymous as possible.

Respondents for this study were approached with nurture and much compassion during the interview process. This is because ethical standards in research work related to informants go over merely harm avoiding, but to also context and nurture their relationship. A strong relationship exists between interviewer and interviewees and should be based on respect and equality and refrained from client interruption during the conducting of the interview. All the participants contributed greatly on full voluntary basis. All the interviewees speak English Language so the entire interviews were conducted in English Language. A lot of care was taken to ensure that all the information given in this study was not misinterpreted. The informants had the chance to voice out their own perceptions on the topic under study. They were with joy by having the opportunity to contribute their knowledge, ideas and experiences about the global concern of the growth of the worlds' ageing population.

Lastly, deducting from the background information of Finns and Ghanaian's ageing population shows that, there have been improvements in life expectancy over the recent years in both countries. This has contributed to the successful ageing population in the both countries. The Finnish population growth rate is about 0.075% (2011 EST) out of the total population of 5,259,250 (July, 2010 EST) whereas the Ghanaian population growth rate is about 1.822% (2011 EST) out of a population of 24,339,838 (2010 EST). Careful comparison of the two countries population ageing rates in proportion to their total ageing populations can be seen that, the proportion of the Finnish ageing population rate is high when compare to Ghanaian's ageing population rate. This could probably be a reason why the Finnish informants express great concern about population ageing across Finland with its related problems.

The findings from this study cannot be proved as it is not a theory proven study or problem solving study. This research work is solely an information generation study which has the purpose of comparing the cultural perception of ageing between Finns and Ghanaians to also seek to address the aims of the project to help provide information and get a deeper understanding of people's view about ageing from multicultural perspectives since the world's population is ageing fast and it is an irreversible life process since everyone or all human beings will undergo through life ageing process.

7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness implies that the information of a research work is based on direct critical argument. It seeks in qualitative research work to report an accurate reflection of factual data as reported by the qualitative researcher; the researcher's accuracy and sincerity to understand and report the participants' points of view, intentions, thoughts and experiences. (Patton 2002) laments on the criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative study and that they are dependent on the factors of validity and reliability. The reliability of this interview data for this study takes its root from the established and reliable relationship between the researcher and informants.

This study was conducted to find out about the cultural perception of ageing between Finns and Ghanaians. The findings of this study cannot be generalized. The codes of research (2003) of Laurea University of Applied Sciences have been adhered to throughout the process of this study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Consent form

I am Ebenezer Bright Doku, a student of Laurea University of Applied Sciences studying a Bachelor of program of Social services. As part of the requirement for the degree program, I am carrying out a thesis. My thesis topic is to study the cultural perception of ageing in Finland and Ghana. This thesis work will be done from the point of view of two cultures been Ghana and Finland. Elderly care work is very important to me as a social worker. This is because everybody when acquires the chance will grow old and there would be the need for someone to provide care. This has therefore triggered me to carry out this research work to enable me provide understanding of what different cultures say about ageing. I am undertaking this research work in collaboration with the City of Espoo's elderly care project of the concept of the elderly. I will use individual interview as I believe is the best method of getting accurate information to fully understand your views on the subject.

All data collected from you will be used only for the purpose of this study and shall therefore be treated confidential. Participation is voluntary and you can therefore withdraw from the study at any time of your choice. Please send me a mail if you wish to withdraw or you can also call me on my cell phone a month prior to the interview. Please feel free to sign in your name in the spaces below to prove your indication of understand to partake in this study.

Thank you.

Ebenezer Bright Doku

Ebenezer. Doku (at) laurea.fi

0452755012

 Name of Participant: ....

 Signature: ....

Appendix 2

Inform consent

I write to seek the consent of the church of Pentecost, Helsinki to seek for authorization to use Ghanaians in the church as my informants for my research work. During this work, all information gathered will be confidentially dealt with. I will uphold to the confidentiality of Laurea U.A.S and make sure no harm comes on any of my informants during the period of my research work.

I hope to seek your approval to enable me carry on with my research work.

Best Regards
Ebenezer Bright Doku

Appendix 3

 Inform Consent

I write to seek the consent of the Finn-catering, Vantaa to seek for authorization to use Finns in the work place as my informants for my research work. During this work, all information gathered will be confidentially dealt with. I will uphold to the confidentiality of Laurea U.A.S and make sure no harm comes on any of my informants during the period of my research work.

I hope to seek your approval to enable me carry on with my research work.

Best Regards

Ebenezer Bright Doku

Appendix 4

Letter to participants

I am a final year Social Service student of Laurea University of Applied Sciences Otaniemi, Espoo. I am undertaking this research work as part of my thesis work. The research topic is a study to unveil the cultural perception of ageing in Finland and Ghana. I am asking permission and consent from you to enable me undertake my study and analyze my findings. This is research work is part of the elderly care project for the city of Espoo. Individual interviews will be used which will last approximately 10-30minutes. Ten informants will partake in the interview session.

This research work is strictly governed by the ethics of thesis work in Laurea University and all information that you will submit will be confidential. I will need your consent to enable me embark on this my research work as my main informants.

Best Regards,

Ebenezer Bright Doku

Appendix 5

Motivation for this research work

As a Bachelor student of Social services studying to work as a professional social worker, the concept of the elderly has been of great concern to me. I have worked in an elderly care project as part of my studies; due to that I have been highly motivated to undertake this research work to seek to uncover the cultural perception of ageing to provide information about elderly people from a more global perspective.

It is common to hear from Social service students that after graduation they will not choose to work in elderly care centers. The answer is due to the stigma attached to working with elderly people. This has prompted me to undertake this research work to find out about how two cultures perceive ageing and to help provide information about the 'concept of the elderly people' from a global point of view. I am of the belief that I will find new information from my informants about the research topic to help address the concept of the elderly in social work to seek understanding and also to help motivate social service students to work in elderly care centers in Finland and abroad. I seek to draw the awareness of how ageing affects people, their way of life and what other cultures say about ageing to help add more information to the general 'concept of the elderly people'.

It is my hope that this research work will be beneficial to students studying social service and also provide them with information about ageing to help them clear the stereotypical ideas about working in elderly care homes. It will also help motivate social service professionals working in elderly care homes to understand different cultural views about older people and old age. 'Ageing' cannot be stopped or reverse in life as it part of our development and life transition from birth to death.

Appendix: 6   **Some Ghanaian and Finnish Proverbs about ageing**

Ghanaian Proverbs	Finnish Proverbs
1. An old man sitting on the ground sees something a child cannot see even if he climbs a tree.	1. A child unwilling to be taught must learn to dig trenches.
2. You can run quicker than an old man but for his wisdom and words you are behind.	2. A child is like and axe; even if it hurts, you still carry them on your shoulders.
3. If you are of the same height with your father it does not mean you are of the same age.	3. A youth who does not work hard will be begging will he is old.
4. When the child sees the eyes of the crab, he says it is a stick.	4. One who grows up without discipline will die without glory.
5. A child does not laugh at the ugliness of his mother.	5. Age does not give sense it only makes one go slowly.
6. A child can fight with an elderly person but cannot contest with the strength of the elderly person.	6. One year ages the old, two years grow a child.

Appendix 7

Research questions

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Nationality?
4. Who is an elderly person?
5. What are the characteristics of an aged person?
6. How would you describe an elderly person/senior citizen?
7. What is the difference between an aged person and a youth?
8. How would you consider someone to be aged person?
9. What is ageing?
10. What concern do you have about the ageing population in your country?
11. How does the ageing population in Finland affect you?
12. How does your age concern you as an individual?
13. What challenges does ageing pose to you in your present life?
14. How would you describe an aged person from a child?