



TRENDS AND MAPPING OF RESEARCH ON ELDERLY SCHOOL: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS AND SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Annisa Rohmah Fajrianty¹, Bambang Syaeful Hadi², Aman³

Magister Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta^{1,2,3}

Correspondence Email: annisarahma0308@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The global increase in the elderly population highlights the growing need for non-formal education to support quality of life in older age. This study aims to analyze the development and direction of research on Elderly Schools, as well as examine their theoretical and practical significance for future scholarly studies. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the PRISMA protocol and bibliometric analysis was conducted through the Scopus database for the period 2015–2025. A total of 66 eligible documents were analyzed to map research trends, thematic focus, and scholarly contributions in the field of Elderly Schools. The findings reveal a significant rise in academic interest over the last decade, with publications showing a global and multidisciplinary distribution. Three major thematic clusters emerged: lifelong learning and education for older adults, mental health and cognitive functioning, and media literacy and digital adaptation among the elderly. The study shows that Elderly Schools function not only as learning institutions but also as instruments for social empowerment and psychological well-being enhancement. Theoretically, the study reinforces the relevance of geragogy and lifelong learning concepts, while practically offering foundations for developing inclusive, adaptive, and technology-oriented learning models for older adults. Future research is recommended to expand international collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches to educational innovation for the elderly.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the global demographic structure indicate a significant increase in the elderly population, which carries strategic implications for social, health, and educational development. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2025) projects that the population aged ≥ 60 years will reach 2.1 billion by 2050, with rapid growth occurring primarily in developing countries. These changes require countries worldwide to anticipate various socio-economic consequences through the strengthening of policies, social services, and educational innovations capable of sustainably supporting the functioning of the elderly. In the educational context, this phenomenon aligns with the lifelong learning paradigm, which positions the right to education as an inherent individual right throughout the life cycle, including the elderly phase, to support active participation in an inclusive learning society (UNESCO, 2023). This concept asserts that education does not cease during the productive years but is a continuous process that plays a pivotal role in maintaining human quality of life and social relations.

In Indonesia, the urgency of fulfilling the rights of the elderly has been regulated through a national legal framework, notably Law Number 13 of 1998 concerning the Welfare of the Elderly, which emphasizes the need to provide opportunities for older adults to remain empowered, independent, and active participants in development. This mandate requires the government, stakeholders, and society to provide facilities and programs that help the elderly maintain their dignity, health, and well-being through relevant social and educational services (Kemenkes, 2023). In response, the government, through the Ministry of Health and the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), has developed various community-based elderly empowerment programs. These include Sekolah Lansia Tangguh (Resilient Elderly Schools), Bina Keluarga Lansia (BKL/Elderly Family Fostering), and Posyandu Lansia (Elderly Integrated Healthcare Center), which serve as non-formal learning platforms facilitating improvements in health literacy, independence, and social welfare for the elderly. The implementation of Elderly Schools has become a non-formal educational innovation designed to create a learning environment for the elderly, enabling them to remain physically, cognitively, and socially active, while possessing psychological resilience to face the challenges of aging (BKKBN, 2023).

Theoretically, education for the elderly is based on the concept of geragogy a theory and learning approach for older adults that emphasizes the meaningfulness of experience, material relevance, independence, and self-empowerment in the learning process (Cahyani et al., 2026). Formosa asserts that geragogical principles encourage the creation of curricula sensitive to the emotional, social, and cognitive needs of the elderly (Formosa, 2019). Thus, Elderly Schools are not merely spaces for knowledge transfer, but instruments of social empowerment capable of enhancing a sense of self-worth, social connection, and meaning of life for the elderly (Rikard et al., 2017). Various studies indicate that the participation of the elderly in learning activities significantly impacts the improvement of mental health, cognitive function, and quality of life, as learning activates brain function, strengthens social relationships, and reduces the risk of social isolation and depression (Bjursell, 2019;

Schirmer et al., 2023). This implies that education for the elderly plays a strategic role in building an active aging ecosystem in alignment with WHO recommendations (OECD, 2019).

New challenges arise alongside rapid digital transformation (Chingiz, 2026). Technological advancements and the penetration of digital media require the elderly to possess digital literacy to adapt to the modern social landscape, including accessing information, public services, and social interactions (Hounnaklang, 2024). Low digital literacy among the elderly has the potential to widen the intergenerational digital divide and increase the risk of social marginalization (Supinganto et al., 2026). Therefore, educational innovations for the elderly in Indonesia are also directed towards strengthening digital literacy to improve their adaptive capacity to social and technological changes (Sulthan et al., 2024). The Digital Academy for Seniors program demonstrates that an inclusive and elderly-friendly digital literacy curriculum tangibly enhances participants' digital resilience and social well-being (Setiansah, Nuryanti, Santoso, Ganjar Runtiko, et al., 2023). Digital learning has proven to provide space for the elderly to remain productive and socially networked, thereby reducing isolation and improving quality of life (Powell & Chen, 2019).

Despite these developments, academic studies concerning Elderly Schools still exhibit significant limitations. First, existing research remains fragmented, focusing more on pedagogical, health, or psychosocial aspects in isolation, without providing a comprehensive mapping of scientific developments in this field. Second, international and national literature has not optimally examined Elderly Schools from an interdisciplinary perspective that connects education, gerontology, public health, and digital technology. Third, despite an increase in publications in recent years, few studies present the state of the art through scientific mapping based on bibliometric data and systematic reviews to illustrate trends, developmental directions, knowledge production centers, collaboration networks, and research gaps (Bakshi & Bhattacharyya, 2021). The absence of this comprehensive mapping potentially hinders the development of evidence-informed policies and innovative programs for Elderly School. Consequently, more systematic research based on scientific evidence analysis is required to understand the extent to which Elderly Schools have been studied as a field of knowledge, their publication distribution patterns, and the future direction of this research. Bibliometric analysis and Systematic Literature Review (SLR) serve as relevant approaches to objectively map the scientific landscape through standardized measurements of publication characteristics, geographical distribution, research actors, keywords, and citation networks regarding the topic of Elderly Schools based on internationally indexed data. This approach enables the identification of main themes, research trends, and unaddressed scientific gaps, while providing recommendations for more innovative and contextual research directions to answer future educational needs for the elderly (Boriati, 2023). In addition to yielding conceptual contributions to the reinforcement of geragogy theory and lifelong learning, this research also offers practical contributions to the formulation of inclusive, adaptive, and responsive development policies for Elderly Schools facing the challenges of global aging and digitalization.

Based on this urgency, this study aims to: (1) analyze the significance and future developmental direction of research on Elderly Schools as a field of scientific inquiry; (2) map

the distribution of publications by country, author, and institution through a Scopus-based bibliometric approach; and (3) formulate relevant theoretical and practical implications for the evidence-based development of education for the elderly. The results of this study are expected to provide conceptual benefits for strengthening the scientific foundation of elderly education, as well as practical benefits in developing innovative policies, curricula, and learning models for elderly empowerment in Indonesia.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) combined with a quantitative bibliometric approach to measure and identify existing research. The objective was to examine the trends, patterns, and predominant topics frequently emerging within this specific field of study. This method adopted the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol as the foundational guideline for systematically structuring the literature review. The selection procedure consisted of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Emilia & Amir, 2022). The application of this protocol played a crucial role in ensuring the transparency and reproducibility of the research, as well as enhancing the reliability and validity of the study's findings. Through these steps, the research provides a comprehensive overview of the dynamics and researcher contributions within this body of literature (Liu et al., 2026). Consequently, it can serve as both a conceptual and practical reference for policy development, further research, and learning innovations in the context of education for the elderly.

The first stage, identification, began with a document search using the keywords ("Elderly School" OR "Senior School" OR "Education for the Elderly" OR "Lifelong Learning for Older Adults" OR "Gerontological Education" OR "Learning in Old Age") through the Scopus database (<http://www.scopus.com/>), yielding an initial total of 979 documents. Subsequently, using the same keywords, the search was restricted to the article title, abstract, and keywords, with the publication year limited to the 2015–2025 period, resulting in 503 documents relevant to the topic of Elderly Schools.

The next stage was data screening, during which the researchers established several inclusion criteria. The selected documents were initially restricted to journal articles, reducing the number to 269 documents. A subsequent screening required the selected documents to be articles within the social sciences subject area, written in English, and fully accessible (full-text availability). This final filtering left 66 documents that met all the predetermined criteria.

Furthermore, to examine publication trends related to Elderly Schools, a descriptive analysis was conducted based on the Scopus data using a bibliometric approach. During the analysis process, VOSviewer software was utilized as the primary tool for mapping to visualize the relationships among authors, citations, and co-occurring keywords. Through this analysis, the knowledge map and developmental trajectory within the field of study could be identified. The selection procedure for the documents meeting the criteria is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

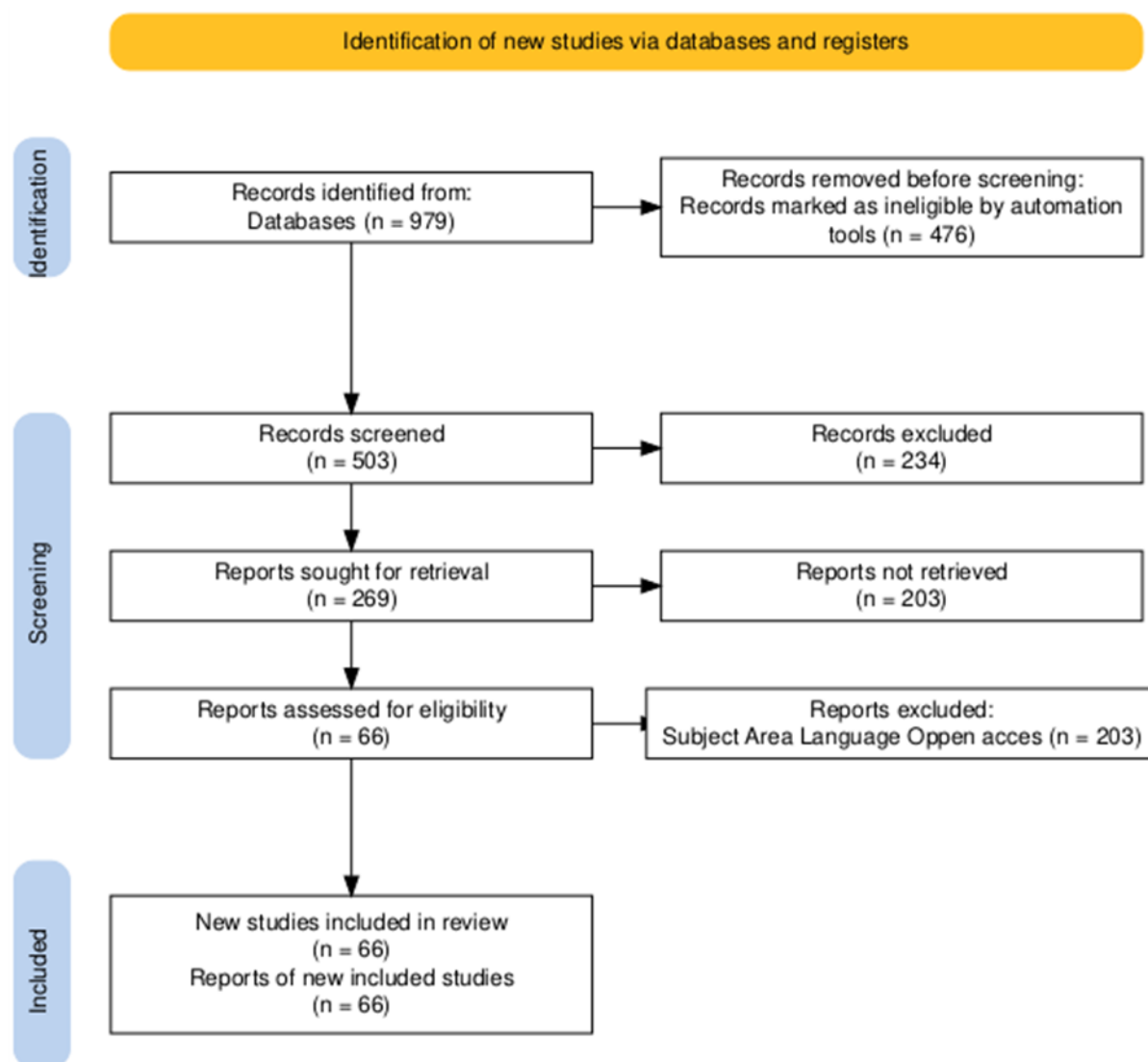


Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram on for Eldelry School

"The combination of bibliometric analysis and a Systematic Literature Review assists researchers in comprehending existing research findings and current emerging trends. Integrating these two approaches provides a comprehensive understanding of the field of study."

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The publications analyzed in this study resulted from a selection process based on predetermined criteria, yielding a total of 66 scientific documents related to Elderly Schools within the Scopus database. Spanning a publication period from 2015 to 2025, the literature was examined using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis. The data was sourced by identifying the number of published articles, publication years, and journal sources. Furthermore, this research highlights the most influential elements within the field of Elderly Schools, encompassing key authors, institutional affiliations, and contributing countries.

Article Trends by Publication Year

Based on the documents retrieved from the Scopus database, a total of 66 articles discussing Elderly Schools were published between 2015 and 2025. This quantity indicates that research concerning Elderly Schools remains relatively limited, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Documents by year

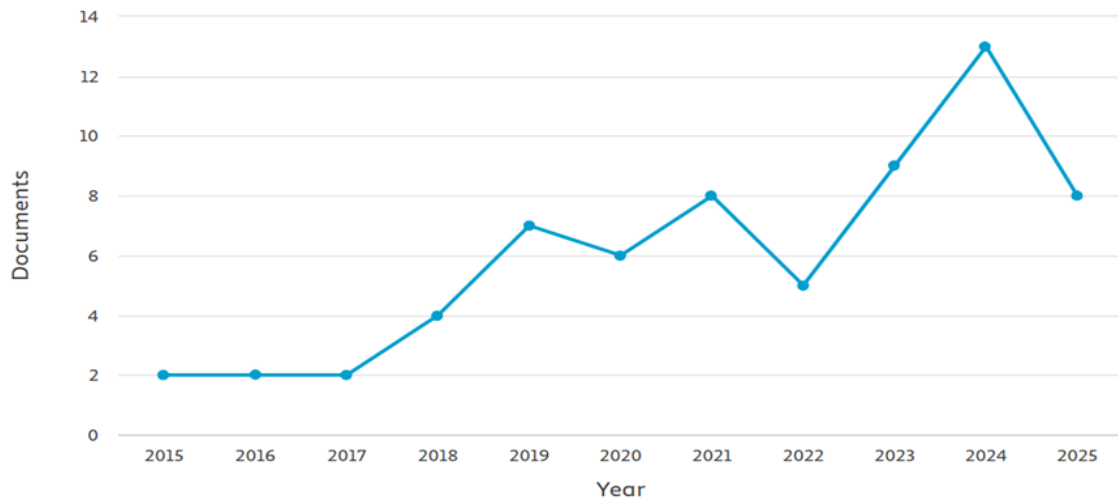


Figure 2. Study Trends by Publication Year

Source. Data base Scopus

Based on Figure 2, which illustrates the number of publications from 2015 to 2025, the results demonstrate a significant upward trend in research over the last decade. During the initial period of 2015 to 2017, the publication volume was relatively low and limited, with only two documents per year, indicating that this research topic had not yet become a primary focus for scholars. Entering the 2018–2019 period, there was an increase in the number of publications from four to seven documents, signifying growing researcher interest in the subject.

The 2020–2022 period exhibited moderate fluctuation, oscillating between five and eight documents, likely influenced by global dynamics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted research activities. Subsequently, a highly significant surge occurred in 2023–2024, peaking in 2024 with 13 documents. This suggests that the topic has become a highly sought-after field of study, relevant to current social and academic developments. However, a slight decline to eight documents was observed in 2025, although this figure remains higher than in the earlier periods. Overall, this trend portrays a consistent and sustained increase in research interest. It indicates a tendency that the field of study has evolved from an exploratory stage toward a phase of scientific maturity, while also beginning to experience a diversification in research directions in recent years.

Country Contributions

The allocation of scientific studies related to Elderly Schools based on country or geographical region is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Top ten countries with the highest number of publications

Rank	Country	Total Article
1	Nigeria	12
2	United Kingdom	9
3	Thailand	7
4	Australia	6
5	South Afrika	6
6	Indonesia	5
7	Ukraine	5
8	Russian Federatiom	4
9	United States	4
10	China	3

Based on Table 1, Nigeria ranks as the top country with the highest number of publications, totaling 12 articles, followed by the United Kingdom with 9 articles, and Thailand with 7 articles. The prominent position of Nigeria indicates an increasing research interest within developing countries regarding educational and social welfare issues, particularly in the context of non-formal education and lifelong learning for the elderly. Subsequently, countries such as Australia, South Africa, and Indonesia occupy the succeeding positions with 5 to 6 publications each, indicating that this research topic possesses global relevance and has garnered attention across both the Asia-Pacific and African regions. Meanwhile, major nations such as the United States, the Russian Federation, and China demonstrate a relatively lower number of publications, which may be attributed to their research focus being more fragmented into the health or educational technology domains.

In general, this distribution of publications reflects the globalization of elderly education issues and the growing attention toward the significance of lifelong learning as an instrument for enhancing the quality of life in old age. This trend aligns with UNESCO's perspective, which emphasizes that lifelong learning is the foundation of an inclusive and sustainable society (UNESCO, 2023a). Furthermore, it is also consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Formosa, which explains that developing countries are currently becoming more active in establishing "Elderly Education" programs as a social strategy to confront population aging (Formosa, 2020). The international collaboration network in the field of research concerning Elderly Schools is presented in Figure 3 below.

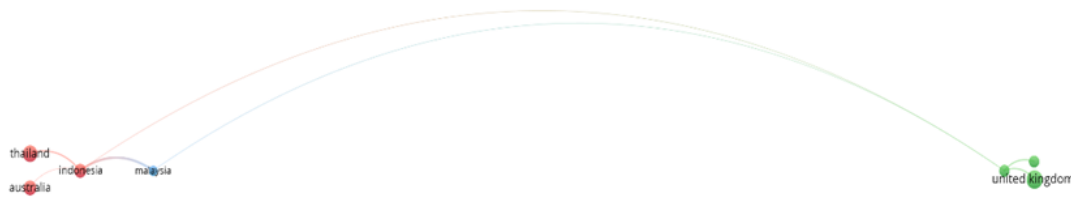


Figure 3. Network Country Visualization in Elderly Schools research.

Source. Output VOSviewer software

Figure 3 illustrates that research related to Elderly Schools remains limited and tends to be concentrated in a few key regions. It is evident that Indonesia occupies a central position within the Southeast Asian network, with direct connections to Thailand, Malaysia, and Australia. This indicates regional collaboration in the development of education for the elderly, particularly within social and non-formal education contexts. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom emerges as the sole strong representation from the European region, exhibiting cross-regional connections to Asian countries. This signifies the UK's role as a potential international research partner in the fields of educational gerontology and lifelong learning. Overall, however, this collaboration remains fragmented and limited, reflecting that research on Elderly Schools is still in the early stages of global cooperative development. It requires enhanced cross-national collaboration to enrich theoretical perspectives and practical implementation across diverse cultural contexts.

Institutional Contributions

Based on institutional allocation, there are ten highly productive institutions in research related to elderly education and lifelong learning. The University of Johannesburg and the University of Ilorin rank at the top with four publications each, followed by Obafemi Awolowo University and the University of Plymouth with three publications each. Furthermore, Maharakham University, Delta State University Nigeria, Deakin University, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, the University of Exeter, and Imphal College contributed between one and two publications. These findings indicate that research on education for the elderly has dispersed across various regions of the world, predominantly in Africa, Asia, and Europe. The focus varies widely, ranging from health literacy and community-based learning models to the enhancement of cognitive function in old age. For instance, Maharakham University in Thailand actively researches the development of self-care models and health literacy for the elderly (Katasila & Promasatayaprot, 2025) whereas the University of Johannesburg highlights the relationship between education and cognitive enhancement in old age (Nikolov, Plamen; Yeh, 2022). In general, this distribution of publications demonstrates global attention to the importance of non-formal education for the elderly in supporting social welfare and quality of life in later years.

Contributions of Publication Sources/Journals

An analysis of publication sources regarding the topic of Elderly Schools reveals that publication trends from 2018 to 2024 depict interesting and rather sporadic dynamics among the selected journals. Most publishers exhibited significant fluctuations, indicating that academic interest in this issue is not consistently sustained across many journals. For example, the International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research showed a surge of interest in 2021 with two articles, followed by a lack of publications in subsequent years. In contrast to this pattern, the British Educational Research Journal demonstrated a stable publication trend, routinely publishing one document annually from 2020 to 2024. Nevertheless, there is an indication of a broadened focus in recent years, with the entry of the Journal of Measurement and Evaluation and Physical Education Theory which have begun to contribute consistently since 2022. Overall, this data reflects that although the field of elderly education possesses several steadfast focal points, the collective attention of the journal community tends to be uneven and highly dependent on specific time periods, as can be observed in Figure 4 below.

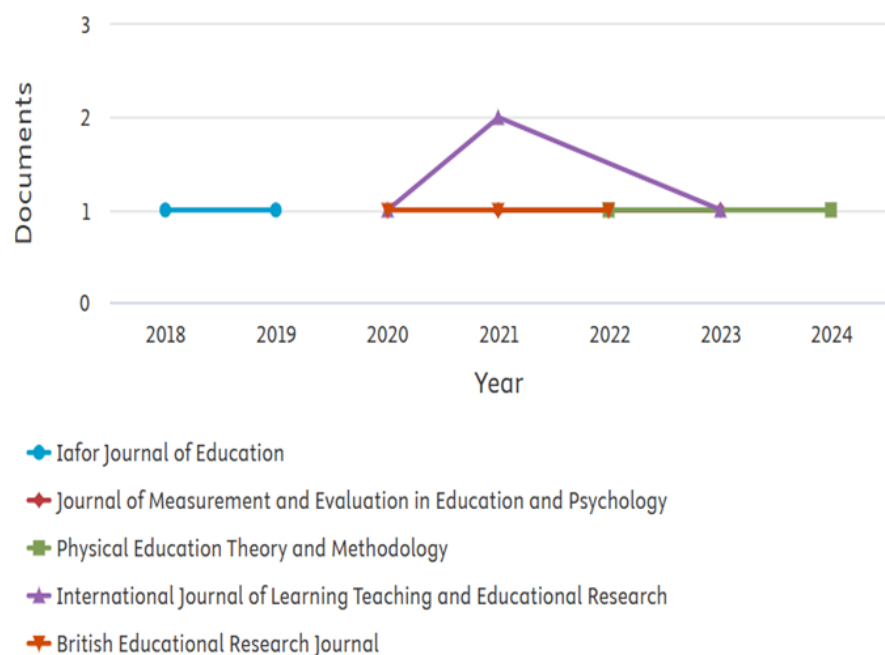


Figure 4. Top 10 journals covering the topic of Elderly Schools

Author Contributions

The distribution of research discussing Elderly Schools by author reveals a significant balance in scientific contributions among most of the top authors. Authors ranging from Acholonu, V.N. to Ahmad, R. have each contributed one document, indicating that research in this field possesses a broad and decentralized base of contributors. However, the graph also highlights a group of authors demonstrating more dominant contributions, namely Afolabi, E.R.I., Done, E.J., and Knowler, H., who have each published two documents. This distribution indicates that, although there is a small group of relatively more productive

authors, overall the research landscape is driven by widespread participation from various scholars rather than being dominated by a few individuals.

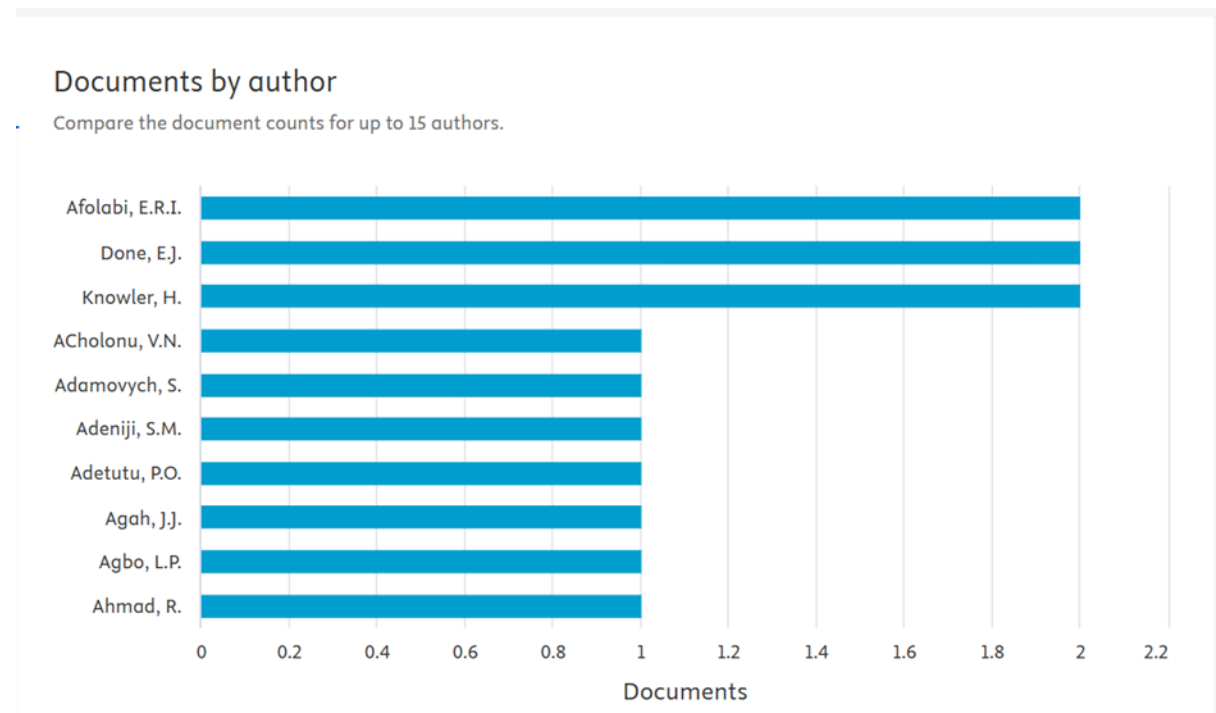


Figure 5. Top 10 authors by number of publications
Source. Database Scopus

Keyword Analysis

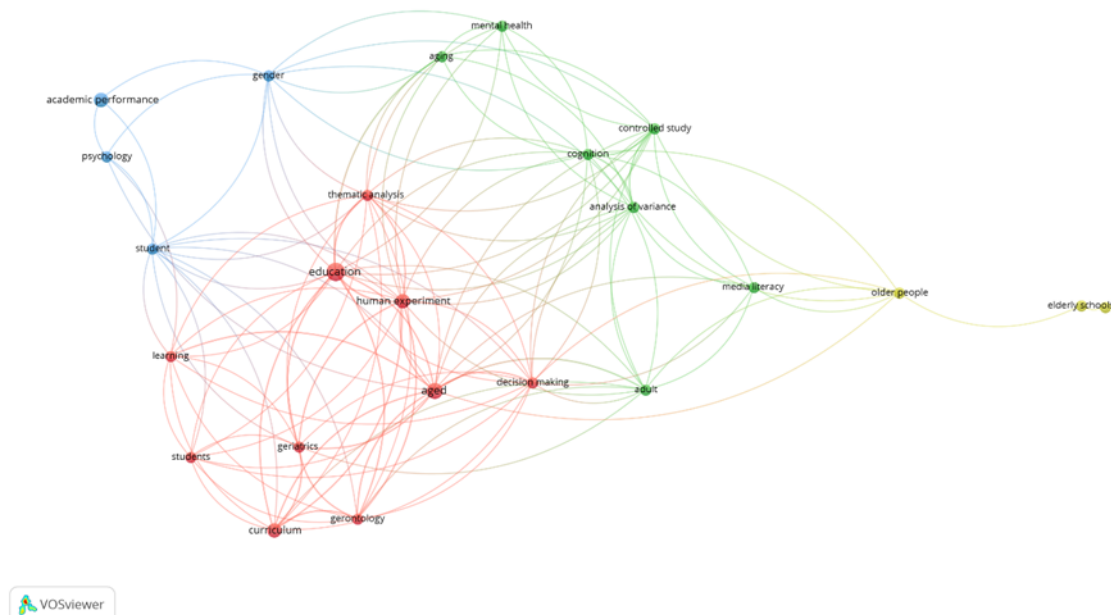


Figure 6. Network visualization of keyword co-occurrence
Source. Output VOSviewer software

The mapping of the keyword analysis results in Figure 6, conducted through a co-occurrence-based visualization approach using VOSviewer software, illustrates the thematic relationships among research topics focusing on education, health, and the welfare of the elderly. In this visualization map, the keyword "elderly school" is situated on the right side, forming a light blue cluster. This cluster is closely related to the keywords "elderly" and "media literacy," indicating that Elderly Schools are examined primarily within the contexts of social issues, media literacy, and the empowerment of older adults.

Generally, the keyword visualization map is divided into several major clusters with distinct focuses. The first cluster, marked in red, highlights topics related to education and learning. Keywords such as education, learning, curriculum, geriatrics, and aged illustrate that education for the elderly is examined as part of the lifelong learning concept. In this context, Elderly Schools are viewed as a form of non-formal education aimed at providing opportunities for older adults to remain intellectually and socially active. The second cluster, colored green, focuses on cognitive aspects and mental health, featuring keywords such as cognition, aging, mental health, and controlled study. This relationship demonstrates that learning activities in old age play a crucial role in maintaining cognitive function and enhancing psychological well-being. Elderly Schools serve not only as a place to acquire new knowledge but also as a medium to prevent cognitive decline associated with the aging process.

Meanwhile, the light blue cluster highlights the relationship between the elderly, media literacy, and Elderly Schools. This cluster depicts a research direction that emphasizes the importance of media and digital literacy for the elderly (Fakmit & Noosorn, 2025). Elderly Schools act as a facility to strengthen the adaptive capacity of older adults toward the development of information technology, while simultaneously bridging the intergenerational digital divide (Staehr et al., 2026). Thus, Elderly Schools also play a role in broadening social participation and fostering the independence of the elderly in the modern era (Salathong & Thoranee, 2021). Furthermore, a yellow cluster containing the keywords gender, psychology, and academic performance highlights the psychological dimensions and gender differences within the learning context. This indicates that research on Elderly Schools also considers individual factors that can influence motivation, learning experiences, and outcomes between male and female elderly individuals. Overall, the analysis results show that the topic of Elderly Schools is multidisciplinary, interconnecting the fields of education, psychology, health, and social sciences. Elderly Schools are not merely educational platforms but also instruments for social empowerment and quality of life enhancement for older demographics. Through targeted and participatory learning activities, the elderly can maintain cognitive, emotional, and social balance. Future research directions could focus on developing learning models that are more inclusive, adaptive, and technology-based to address the needs of the elderly in the digital age.

Theoretical and Practical Implications for Future Research

An analysis of the VOSviewer keyword visualization map indicates that the topic of Elderly Schools positions itself at the intersection of various scientific disciplines: education,

psychology, gerontology, and digital technology. From a theoretical perspective, a crucial aspect is the need to deepen the application of geragogy as a more established theoretical foundation. Geragogy—the theory and practice of education for older adults—emphasizes elements of empowerment, personally relevant learning, and the design of curricula sensitive to the physical, cognitive, and psychological aspects of the elderly. For instance, (Schirmer et al., 2023) found in their study that digital literacy programs adopting geragogical principles, by paying attention to self-efficacy, peer learning, and supportive learning environments, are essential for overcoming barriers related to negative perceptions of aging.

Learning theories such as lifelong learning also receive significant reinforcement (Naiyuan, 2026). The concept of lifelong learning is no longer merely an abstract idea, but a framework that can be utilized to design Elderly Schools as non-formal learning institutions that are rooted in the community, culturally relevant, and responsive to technological and social changes (Saengkaew et al., 2026). The study "Digital Literacy, Technology Education and Lifelong Learning for Elderly" asserts that, as part of social innovation policy, media literacy and technology education must be viewed as an integral component of elderly well-being, rather than just supplementary skills (Boriati, 2023). Theoretically, there is also an implication that future research needs to address the relationship between elderly education, mental well-being, and cognitive function a connection apparent from the cognition and mental health cluster in the map (Sciences, 2025). For example, the study "Reaping the Rewards Later: How Education Improves Old-Age Cognition in South Africa" shows that an additional year of schooling can improve memory and general cognitive function in old age, especially in women, through mechanisms of social support, healthy lifestyle habits, and stress reduction (Nikolov, Plamen; Yeh, 2022). Consequently, theories combining elderly education with health and social psychology successful aging theory, social activity theory, and life adaptation theory will be highly relevant for discussion and re-examination within the context of Elderly Schools (Fadhila & Kharazi, 2023).

From a practical standpoint, the research results and keyword mapping indicate that the implementation of Elderly Schools must be executed with an inclusive and adaptive design. Regarding the curriculum, there must be a combination of practically relevant materials the use of digital media, media literacy, and activities supporting social interaction and teaching methods that account for the physical and cognitive limitations of the elderly (Zhang et al., 2023). The "Digital Academy for Seniors" study in Purwokerto demonstrates that digital literacy programs designed to be unburdensome, enjoyable, easy to follow, and relevant to daily needs can enhance the digital resilience and quality of life of the elderly (Mite Setiansah, Nuryanti, Edi Santoso, Agus Ganjar Runtiko, 2023). Furthermore, intergenerational learning and peer learning emerge as crucial factors in recent studies. A method wherein the elderly interact not only with peer instructors but also with younger generations can strengthen learning motivation, reduce stigma or negative perceptions of aging, and simultaneously expand their social networks (Tewabe & Seid, 2026).

At the policy and institutional practice levels, regulatory support, funding, teacher training, and infrastructure including access to technology and the internet are essential

(Hadiwiardjo, 2025). Digital learning models for the elderly, such as the one proposed in the study "Research on the Model of Digital Learning for Elderly People in the Context of Lifelong Education," can serve as a solution to address the physical and mobility limitations of older adults, provided they are supported by user-friendly facilities, design, and adequate resources (Wang, 2024)

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of this study indicate that Elderly Schools significantly contribute to enhancing the social well-being and cognitive function of the participants. The learning process, conducted through a geragogical approach and structured activities, has proven capable of strengthening social interactions, increasing self-confidence, expanding social networks, and stimulating cognitive abilities among the elderly. Consequently, this research answers the research question by demonstrating that the involvement of older adults in Elderly Schools provides a tangible positive impact on improving their quality of life, encompassing both social and cognitive dimensions. These findings affirm that Elderly Schools serve not only as non-formal educational platforms but also as instruments for social empowerment, oriented toward realizing empowered, independent, and dignified elderly individuals within society.

Recommendation

Based on these research findings, it is recommended that the implementation of Elderly Schools be sustainably strengthened through synergy among local governments, health institutions, and community organizations. Local governments and program managers are expected to enhance curriculum quality, facilitator capacity, and elderly-friendly learning facilities to maximize the benefits of Elderly Schools. For facilitators and Elderly School managers, it is crucial to integrate educational activities with practical and enjoyable exercises, ensuring that the elderly remain motivated to continue their learning. This recommendation is also directed at families and the wider community to provide social, moral, and motivational support, thereby encouraging older adults to remain active in the learning process and participate in social activities. Such efforts are essential to ensure the sustainability of the program and reinforce its impact on the well-being of the elderly in the future.

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