

REVIEWS

Aging in Global South: Challenges and Opportunities

Maria Carinnes, P. Alejandria-Gonzalez, Subharati Ghosh and Nicolas Sacco, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2019, 214 pp., hbk £65.00, ISBN 13: 978 1 4985 4529 7

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Any undergraduate or postgraduate student starting to work on ageing populations in the Global South should add this book to their literature review. The primary purpose of the book is ‘to portray how development is intrinsically tied to the social, economic, and political life of the older adults, and suggest policy recommendations in safeguarding their rights and securing their overall well-being’ (p. xiii). A resolution followed by all the authors of the book.

The book is composed of nine empirical chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion. There are three sections set in South America (Argentina and Brazil), four in Asia (India, Thailand and the Philippines) and two in Africa (Nigeria). Each one has an interesting output about their case of study and a reflection on doing studies from the South. The reader will find interesting results about demographic changes, transition in life through time, migration, social capital, living arrangements, health care, government pensions, income supports, food insecurity and poverty. The diversity among chapters allows broader understanding of the current situation of the ageing population.

Another key strength of this book is that the editors start with an interesting definition of what ageing is, which could be useful as a reference for future studies in the Global South. They conceive of ageing as a ‘dynamic and systemic phenomenon that is complex and goes much beyond using the chronological age marker singularly in defining who an older adult is, and their life experiences’ (p. xv). Not only the variety and complexity of the ageing population are recognised, but also the structural influence of political and economic forces such as state policies. This major task undertaken by the editors is an excellent effort and an important step towards promoting more studies about the ageing population in the South. However, as a limitation, it would appear that the book is over-ambitious in its claims. The sample of countries does not represent all the realities in the South, which restricts their content, as the authors also recognised. This seems to be a greater purpose than what can be achieved in just one book. However, it is an excellent beginning. An option for this book would have been to have adopted a theoretical approach to observe the reality of ageing in the Global South. In this sense, postcolonial theories would have been an excellent framework (Santos, 2017).

These studies not only promote more works from the Global South as a challenge for non-governmental organisations, government institutions and academia, but also stress that all advances that have been done from the South should be recognised in the Global North (Santos, 2016).

If you are looking for some studies about ageing in one of the countries selected by the book, this is an excellent start. In fact, it could be a great reference for different audiences. Students from different levels can learn about the distinctions in the context of the Global South and the relevance of considering it. Researchers who are facing an investigation in these countries can find many suggestions of what is needed in this field, which is always useful in generating ideas for new projects. Finally, it could be helpful even to policy makers with professional backgrounds interested in learning more about these cases and thinking how they could create public policies according to their audience.

This book manages to propose many current challenges equally important for several countries of the Global South. In particular, the authors acknowledge the heterogeneity in the experiences by cohorts and sub-groups in each case. Also, they make some recommendations in the future as opportunities to better confront the fact that, in the Global South, ‘none of these countries are adequately prepared to address the needs of the older adults’ (p. 181). The challenges and the opportunities have been clearly established by this book; now it is our turn, as readers, to take care of them.

References

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Growing Old with the Welfare State. Eight British Lives

Nick Hubble, Jennie Taylor and Philip Tew (eds), Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2019, 159 pp., pbk £17.99, ISBN 13: 978-1-3500-3309-2

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This collection of eight accounts by people in later life of their life stories and reflections on ageing and cultural change in their lifetimes arises from the editors’ own reflections on the experience of ageing following their previous research exploring