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RESEARCH ARTICLE

FACTORS THAT HINDER ADULTS IN EDUCATION THE EFFECT OF GENDER, AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, a comprehensive approach to adult education is presented, in particular the range of factors that can prevent adults from participating in any kind of educational program. Quantitative research was conducted with a questionnaire for adults in order to determine which factors influence their participation in lifelong learning. These factors have been found to vary depending on gender, age and marital status. All of these elements play a crucial role in the educational process of adults and their further development.

INTRODUCTION

Factors that prevent adults from participating in educational programs are a timeless issue in lifelong learning. Adults have complete personalities and often find it difficult to return to the classroom for many reasons, internal and external, as factors that prevent adults from acquiring the role of learner are on the one hand obstacles that start with the individual, such as insecurity and low self-esteem, elements that may refer to unpleasant past experiences in the field of education and now work discouragingly to re-participation. Obstacles also arise from the environment in which they live, such as family obligations, professional and often the combination of both factors, which is a brake on the educational development of an adult, who despite the strong desire for further education, find it difficult to combine daily roles, such as spouse, father, employee and trainee (Moustakas & Fokiali, 2019). In the present study, an attempt is made to confirm the theory with practice, regarding the factors that prevent them from engaging in adult education, which is a key issue, which is why it was necessary to conduct this research, then to study of some key criteria related to adults themselves.

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Obstacles to adult learning: An important and critical factor in adult education is the obstacles which arise and are a brake on the educational process, which include all social factors and the process of changing established perceptions and attitudes, which may often hinder and / or remove adults from any educational endeavor. (Moustakas & Fokiali, 2019), (Polson, 1993). These barriers fall into three categories. According to Kokko, the first category concerns the poor organization of educational activity (Kokkos, 2005a). It is expected that the trainees will be disappointed with an incomplete program in terms of organization, for example, the objectives or the material and technical infrastructure. The second category concerns the social obligations and duties that concern the trainees, which are also referred to as external obstacles. The third category concerns internal barriers related to the learner's personality. According to Kokkos, this category includes obstacles related to the pre-existing knowledge and values of the trainees, elements that are difficult to change, due to the specific way of thinking and beliefs (Kokkos, 2005a), (Bourdieu, 1985), but also the feeling of challenge from the trainer. Moreover, these barriers are also related to psychological factors, such as lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, stress about the learning process, and the successful outcome of their endeavor (Rogers, 2002). Obstacles can also be divided into the following three categories (Cross, 1981): those related to the life situation of the learner at the present stage of his / her life (situational), those related to the obstacles

concerning the educational framework (institutional barriers) which have elements that discourage the trainee and finally the dispositional barriers, which concern the attitudes and perceptions of the trainees (Moustakas & Fokiali, 2017). Approaching the reasons that prevent adults from lifelong learning, obstacles arise from the circumstances and from the individual, due to personal schedule as well as other personal factors, such as lack of time due to family obligations (21.8%), usually due to children or heavy workload (13.6%) and professional obligations. Significant reasons also include financial difficulties (13.3%), lack of basic qualifications (7.1%), which hinder participation in educational programs (Kailis & Pilos, 2005), low social status and the views of others. Moreover, there is a risk that the institutional and structural factors, such as the limit of absences, the implementation of a program on specific days and hours, the lack of certification, etc., will have a negative effect on the combination of psychological and personality conditions, lack of confidence, goals and the feeling that someone is too old to study (Moustakas & Karagianni, 2018).

Following this observation, there are steps to enhance participation in lifelong learning, even for vulnerable groups, but the goals set are not very clear, which raises the question of whether continuing to learn is indeed enhanced. Furthermore, there is an adult approach that directs them to lifelong learning, aiming to stimulate their interest and at the same time achieving the goal of an education that attracts the citizen without depriving any member of society of opportunities. On the one hand, this movement is aimed at adults with a low educational background, because their abstinence from education is due to lack of interest and on the other hand to social groups that face personal, physical, mental problems or are addicted or independent of substances. It is understood that the educational needs of these individuals must be met through a program tailored to them. Such an effort has already been made by a large number of countries within the last five years, aimed at informing, raising awareness and ultimately welcoming adults to lifelong learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present work, which deals with the causes and effects of adult participation or abstinence from educational programs, the quantitative method is applied. Through this, a systematic investigation of this phenomenon is carried out in an objective, reliable and neutral way. Also, two or more variables are correlated and based on specific questions; it proceeds to the analysis and formulation of some representative conclusions of the sample (Creswell, 2016). Therefore, the aim is to study the relationship between adult barriers and their participation in educational programs. In order to collect the data for the study of the research, a questionnaire was used as a means of a) with closed-ended questions, so that the answers of the sample were limited to specific, predetermined answers, which the sample can answer quickly, without difficulty and b) with mixed-type questions, so that if the proposed answers do not adequately cover the respondents, they will be able to answer freely. The good thing about this self-completed questionnaire is that respondents have the time to complete it in their personal space and so it is easier for them to give a valid answer (Robson, 2010). For this reason, it was sent to the sample by e-mail, giving them the opportunity to respond from any electronic device. To achieve this, an online tool, Google Forms, was used.

Based on this, the data is collected automatically when the answers are submitted. The data is collected in an excel file while creating charts. The questions in this questionnaire are designed in a specific way to achieve the purpose of the research, i.e. to provide us with accurate information and valid measurement of research questions and reliability (Robson, 2010). As for the questionnaire, it was structured based on the characteristics of the sample, i.e. it is addressed to an adult population that has attended an educational program and on the occasion of the bibliographic research carried out in this work. The questions are recorded in a simple and clear way, so that they can be understood by everyone and in terms of its scope is relatively short, so as not to tire and discourage respondents from answering questions honestly (Robson, 2010). Regarding the answers, the Likert scale of five grades is used, with "Not at all" corresponding to 1, "A little" to 2, "Moderate" to 3, "Very" to 4 and "Too much" at 5.

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS software. The descriptive analysis describes the frequencies and percentages of the categorical variables and through the Likert, the frequencies, the percentages, the averages and the standard deviations. In order to select the appropriate statistical criteria, parametric or non-parametric, at the inductive stage it must be checked whether or not the values of the variables follow a normal distribution. Because the regularity test with the Kolmogorov – Smirnov criterion found no non-existent distribution ($p < .05$), the following statistical criteria were selected: a) Mann-Whitney in case our independent variable is categorical with two categories (eg gender.) and b) Kruskal-Wallis if the independent variable has more than two categories (eg marital status).

Descriptions of descriptive analysis: Regarding the factors that prevent adults from participating in adult education programs, a strong percentage is the statement "Poor conditions for holding meetings", as only 3.7% answered that they would participate. Equally high are "Doubtful Program Content", "Working Hours", "Expensive Program Tuition", "Indifferent Program Topics", "Poor Curriculum Planning in Improper Days and Hours", "Limited Update" programs", "Dealing with health problems", "Needless facilities", "Excessive workload", "Incomplete information", "Difficulty accessing", "Absence of appropriate educational structures" with 90-97 percent % (Moustakas & Fokiali, 2017).

This fact is followed by the statements "Limited time due to family obligations", "Lack of available time", "Lack of financial resources", "Limited time due to various obligations", "Suitability of seminars" and "Existence of long-term programs" with percentage 82-89%. Less important obstacles to this sample are "Lack of means of transport", "Limited usefulness at work", "Complex schedules", "Lack of support from the work environment", "Existence of age restrictions" with percentages 74-79%. Some also stated that the "lack of support from the family environment" population 66.9%. For a much smaller percentage, almost half of the sample population (53-58%) is negatively affected by "Negative previous educational experiences" and "Psychological reasons (decreased self-confidence, fear)". The "Negative attitude of the social environment" affects only a small percentage, 36.3%.

INDUCTIVE ANALYSIS RESULTS

Regarding the statistically significant differences of adults who answered the questionnaire in relation to gender, the analysis of the data was performed with the non-parametric criterion Mann Whitney - U test. In the statements about the factors that hinder the participation in an adult education program, statistically significant differences are observed in the following: "Lack of support from the family environment" ($U = 2441,000$, $p = ,043$) finds men less agreeable ($AVR = 2.85$, compared to women $AVR = 3.28$). "Negative previous educational experiences" ($U = 2450,500$, $p = ,047$) are a barrier to participation for men ($AVR = 2.55$) to a lesser extent than for women ($AVR = 2.97$) (Moustakas, 2018). With "Limited time due to various obligations", men are less in agreement ($AVR = 3.50$), compared to women ($AVR = 3.83$). With the last statement "Lack of available time" ($U = 2372,500$, $p = ,019$) men are less in agreement ($AVR = 3.67$), a fact that they consider an obstacle to a lesser extent than women ($AVR = 4,03$).

Regarding the age of the sample in relation to the statistically significant differences, these were analyzed with the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis criterion - H test. Regarding the factors that prevent the participation of adults in an adult education program, statistically significant differences in age are observed in relation to some statements. With "Expensive program tuition" ($H(5) = 12,249$, $p = ,032$), the majority of the sample agrees that they are an obstacle to their participation in an educational program. Ages under 20 ($AVR = 5.00$) and between 50-59 ($AVR = 5.00$) fully agree with this statement. Then ages 40-49 also agree with this statement ($AVR = 4.55$), as do ages 20-29 ($AVR = 4.47$). The age groups that find the expensive tuition fees equally prevent participation, but not so much the ages 30-39 ($AVR = 4.16$) and over 59 ($AVR = 4.00$) (Moustakas & Karagianni, 2018). Another reason that is considered an obstacle to participation in such programs is the "Complex schedules" ($H(5) = 14,289$, $p = ,014$) mainly for the ages 50-59 ($AVR = 4.50$) and under 20 ($AVR = 4,25$). This statement is found as a barrier to participation to a lesser extent by the ages 40-49 ($AVR = 3.45$) and 20-29 ($AVR = 3.42$). In contrast to the ages 30-39 ($AVR = 2.96$) and over 59 ($AVR = 2.50$). "Lack of means of transport" ($H(5) = 17,583$, $p = ,004$) is a very significant obstacle for those under 20 ($AVR = 4.75$), between 40-49 ($AVR = 4,00$), 20-29 ($AVR = 3.76$) and 50-59 ($AVR = 3.75$). It is a much smaller obstacle for ages 30-39 ($AVR = 3.08$) and even less so for ages over 59 ($AVR = 2.50$) (Moustakas & Fokiali, 2019).

In relation to the marital status of the trainees, the statistically significant differences of the population of the sample are presented after the application of the Kruskal-Wallis H test. The question related to the factors hindering participation in an adult education program presents statistically significant differences, following the application of Kruskal-Wallis The test in the statement "Expensive program tuition" ($H(2) = 8,744$, $p = ,013$). As for the present statement, the students of the unmarried category are very agreeable ($AVR = 4.50$), as well as the students of the married category ($AVR = 4.25$), quite a big incentive to prevent participation is also for students of the divorced category ($AVR = 3,33$) (Moustakas & Fokiali, 2019). According to the next statement "Remote facilities of the institution" ($H(2) = 6,402$, $p = ,041$) it seems to be an obstacle mainly for married people ($AVR = 4,12$) and to a lesser extent for unmarried people ($AVR = 4.00$), in

contrast to the category of divorces which shows that the results are not affected by such obstacles ($AVR = 2.67$) (Moustakas, 2018).

Conclusion

Although adult education is a key part of adult life, especially of the female population and especially young people, it is observed that participation in lifelong learning is also marked by older age, but there are elements of their daily life that are a brake on this effort, such as increased family obligations. Learning is not related to their interests, nor does it require further theoretical training and training due to the nature of their professional employment. There is also a small percentage of male participants with only 38.3%, and it is also observed that the older the adult, the lower the participation rate (over 59 years, 1.2% participation). This may be due to young people's desire for further learning and their need to update their qualifications in order to enter the labor market dynamically, according to a study by the OECD (1996). According to a study by CEDEFOP (2015), older people are hindered by the family factor, but also by the workforce, as they find it difficult to combine all these aspects in their daily lives. This fact also justifies the three-child and multi-child with a participation rate of only 1.2%. Also impressive is the fact that the unemployed participate to a lesser extent in adult education programs with a rate of 12.3%, in contrast to the already employed who have high participation rates (73.5%). Lack of motivation, such as cultivating skills, lack of need for personal development, lack of needs and financial motivation, the existence of an inappropriate curriculum, difficult access and lack of certification are deterrents to adult participation. Adult education is an important part not only in the adults' professional but also in their personal lives. Through it, they are provided with opportunities for vocational training and financial and personal support. Therefore, more learning opportunities should be provided to adults, but also solutions that would address the reasons that prevent them from participating in such programs should be identified.

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