

MOTIVATING ADULT LEARNERS TO LEARN AT ADULT-EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT: This study's main purpose was to identify adult learners' motives to pursue learning at Saudi Arabia's Yanbu adult-education schools. The study also investigates if there is a difference, by gender, by age, and among the learners' perceptions, about both the internal and external motivation to learn. The study's theoretical framework came from the adult learning theory. A survey, consisting of a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The survey instrument has two parts. Section one requests demographic information (gender, and age). The second section asks participants about their reasons (motives) to learn. The study's population included all adult learners who study at the Yanbu adult-education schools in Saudi Arabia. Overall, the results of the study revealed the importance of the five motivators for the adult learners at Saudi Arabia's Yanbu adult-education schools. However, this study indicated that adult learners are more motivated by internal, rather than external motivation. Religious stimulation and cognitive interest were the strongest motivators for learning, respectively. There is a statistically significant difference in family togetherness, social stimulation, and cognitive interest due to gender favoring females. Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference in cognitive interest due both the 30-40 and over 40 age groups.

Keywords: adult learners, adult education, Saudi Arabia, gender, age, student perceptions, motivation

Adults' motivation to participate in continuing education as they age has been a subject of interest for various researchers (Galbraith, 2004). The motivational factors vary according to people's age group as well as different reasons to learn. Adult learners are motivated in various ways. For many adults, there are several motivations to engage in learning, such as learning what is relevant to their real-life situations and what is useful for them (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2012)

Knowles (1984) considered that the motivation factor for adult learners is different than it is for children. According to McKeachie (1978), the teacher needs to understand the learner's motivation before engage in learning in order to provide an effective learning environment. For example, according to Gom (2009), if teachers understand the nature of the learner, as well as his/ her learning needs and tendencies, "this will help them to prepare their lessons and delivery in a manner that brings out maximum output – or learning" (p. 18). Therefore, this study's aim is to identify the perceptions of adult learners at the Yanbu adult-education schools in Saudi Arabia regarding the motivation to learn. The study also investigates if there is a difference, by gender, by age, and among the learners' perceptions, about both the internal and external motivation to learn.

Yanbu Adult-Education Schools

Yanbu is a major Red Sea port in the Al Madinah province of western Saudi Arabia. Yanbu adult-education schools are the supervised by the General Department of Adult Education, which is under the Ministry of Education. Yanbu's General Department of

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Adult Education made many efforts for literacy and adult education. For example, it gave people the opportunity to catch up with literacy and general educations as well as the opportunity to continue their education at adult education schools. The Yanbu adult-education schools' vision is to help adult learners acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable people to pursue lifelong learning. The schools also provide learners with skills and knowledge that are necessary to participate in the country's overall development. The Yanbu adult-education schools mission is to provide adult learners with an appropriate learning environment that meets' needs by considering the characteristics of adult learners. The Yanbu adult- education schools' goals are to deepen God's love in the learners' hearts; to provide an opportunity for people who have completed the basic stage of literacy for continuing education in other phases; and to organize various cultural programs for adults' cultural, social, and economic needs (Ministry of Education, 2018).

According to the Ministry of Education (2017), general adult education in Saudi Arabia includes three years of primary school, and three years each of intermediate and high school. Many programs offered by the General Department of Adult Education enable adults to learn. This study focuses in general adult education that offers people who have not completed or who dropped out of their general-education studies the opportunity to continue learning. The program is also offered for individuals who wish to improve their education level.

Motivation and Its Types

Motivation is a key factor for successful learning because it can stimulate people' need to learn. The word motivation is difficult to understand (Arends, 2015). For a long-term, educators have an interest in trying to understand the motives which adults express for learning (Galbraith, 2004). According to Beck (2004), the term “motivation” came from the Latin verb “movere,” meaning to move. “Motivation is then concerned with our movements, or actions, and what determines them” (p. 3). Rogers and Horrocks (2010) stated, “Motivation in learning is that compulsion which keeps a person within the learning situation and encourages them to learn” (p.105). Ryan and Deci (2000) pointed out that learners who have motives will be active in doing these things. On the other hand, learners who are not motivated will act negatively when performing tasks.

Adult learners are stimulated to learn in a variety of ways. Boshier (1991) as well as, Knowles et al (2012) found that adults are motivated to learn by internal and external factors. Some adults are motivated by external factors (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, etc), and others utilize internal factors (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, etc) to engage in their learning. For Knowles et al (2012), “the most potent motivators are internal pressures” (p. 67). Internal motives are hard to recognize because they are not visible motives that can be perceived or observed tangibly (Pintrich, Schunk, & Meece, 2007). For example, social motivations are the active stimuli that generate the inner desire for learning. Some adult learners join classes to meet people, perhaps because of their sense of isolation and loneliness. Others are motivated to learn because they love the intellectual activity involved with gaining new knowledge

and skills. Something inside them makes them have a strong desire to learn (Gom, 2009). Pintrich et al (2007) stated: intrinsic motivation represents engagement in an activity for its own sake. “People who are intrinsically motivated work on tasks because they find them enjoyable. Task motivation is its own reward and doesn’t depend on explicit rewards or other external constraints” (p. 257).

In contrast, external motivation refers to behavior that makes learners act not because they are interested in the learning, but for some benefits of external compensation (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005), for example, money, grades and honor, social or family pressures, and the threat of punishment. Compliments, appreciation, and acknowledgements are all sources of extrinsic motivation (Nas, 2016). Both internal and external motivation can play a vital role with the learners’ attitudes about learning (Lee & Pang, 2005). Therefore, it is very important for teachers to know why adults are learning. Sometimes, adults are motivated to learn by one type of motivation, and other time, both kinds of motivation influence adult learners.

Statement of Problem

Some adult-education teachers simply believe that presenting the subject to adult learners is enough. Adult-education programs in Saudi Arabia do not consider the learners’ needs as well as the roles that these individuals have in their families and society. Frequently, learners are leaving school; as a result, adults may stay in the ranks of the illiterate (Al-Al-Dakhel, 2010). Adults have special learning needs that are closely associated with social roles. For them, learning is problem-centered and intrinsically motivated. These needs should be considered (Knowles, 1980). Motivation is the main driver of adult learning. If students do not have a strong motivation to learn, they will not learn and will not be able to learn. This study is designed to help researchers and teachers understand the underlying factors that influence Saudi Arabia's adult learners regarding the motivation to learn. There is a lack of research, addressing the role of various motivation types to influence the adult learners' decision to return to school to learn, especially in Saudi Arabia. This study is designed to answer the following questions: What factors motivate adult learners at the Yanbu adult-education schools in Saudi Arabia? Is there a statistically significant difference, based on gender and age, for the adult learners' motivation at Saudi Arabia's Yanbu adult-education schools?

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it may enrich the field of adult education regarding the motivation of adult learners. The information gathered in this study may provide educators with a clear understanding about why adults learn. The study might give meaningful insight and important information for Saudi Arabia's program planners and adult educators to reform adult-education programs in a way, which corresponds with the adults' motives as well as the condition of times and its variables.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is focused on Knowles' theory of andragogy. According to Knowles (1968), andragogy is the art and science of teaching adults. Knowles et al. (2012) stated that andragogy is based upon six assumptions regarding the adult learners' characteristics, which are built around the learners' needs and interests. The sixth principle of andragogy is directly related to the motivation of adult learners. Ferrari (2013) pointed out that "the other five can also be viewed as highly revealing, not only in terms of how adults learn, but also in terms of what motivates them to engage and remain engaged in learning" (p. 31). Adult learners have a great desire to know the reason to learn something before they start learning, and they have a deep need to move towards autonomy. Accordingly, adults are ready to learn and to apply the things they need to know in order to cope with their real-life situations. Adults come in an educational activity with different experiences. The adults' orientation with learning is life-centered; therefore, their motivations and purposes to learn vary (Knowles et al., 2012). Some adults are responsive to external factors and others utilize internal factors to engage in learning.

Methods and Procedures

This study's main purpose is to identify adult learners' motives to pursue learning at Saudi Arabia' Yanbu adult-education schools. The study also investigates if there is a difference, by gender, by age, and among the learners' perceptions, about both the internal and external motivation to learn. This study's theoretical framework comes from adult-learning theory.

Population and Sample

Adult learners are individuals who return to adult-education schools (having not completed or dropping out of their general education) to keep learning after the formal education years. The director of the Department of Adult Education in Yanbu provided a list of individuals who were studying at the Yanbu adult-education schools in 2018. The total population consists of 463 students (89 males and 373 females). The study was administered in spring 2018 Semester. The entire population was asked to complete the survey. (Table 1). A total of 160 adult learners (50 males and 110 females) participated in this study.

Table 1

Number of Learners in Adult-Education Schools (by Gender and Age) in 2018

		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	50	31.3
	Female	110	68.8
Age	Less than 30	36	22.5
	30-40	77	48.1
	> 40	47	29.4
Total		160	100.0

Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data, participants were asked about their motivation to learn. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first part requested demographic information (gender and age) and was developed by the researchers. The second section included five motivational aspects: (a) social contact, (b) family togetherness, (c) social stimulation, (d) cognitive interest, and (e) religious stimulation. The first four aspects were adapted from Kim and Meriam's (2004) questionnaire which was a modified version of Boshier's (1991) Educational Participation Scale (EPS, A-Form). Each motivational aspect had six items. The two religious stimulation items were developed by the researchers, so that the items fit the Arab environment. The EPS-A Form is based on Likert-scale items used to measure the role of various motivation types to influence the adult learners' reasons for returning to school in order to learn. The four-point scale includes no influence, little influence, moderate influence, and much influence.

Educational Participation Scale (EPS, A-Form)

The Educational Participation Scale (EPS, A-form) created by Boshier (1991), originally had 7 factors, each consisting of 6 items, for a total of 42 items. In this study, researchers used Kim and Meriam (2004) who tested the instrument's reliability, and validity. This questionnaire was modified version of Boshier's (1991) instrument. This version had 24 items that asked participants their reasons (motives) for enrolling in the Learning in Retirement (LIR) Institute's courses. The EPS was modified based on suggestions from LIR's president and board directors. From the seven factors, three factors were considered to be inappropriate for this particular group of enrollees. The modified final version of the EPS used in this study contained four factors: (a) social contact, (b) family togetherness, (c) social stimulation, and (d) cognitive interest. The reliability coefficient for the social contact factor was the highest (.92). The coefficient alpha for the family togetherness factor was much lower (.68). The social stimulation factor was (.84), while cognitive interest was (.80).

Reliability and Validity

The instrument was originally developed in English. It was translated into Arabic using two official translation offices. Then, the instrument was translated back into English. The Arabic and English versions of the survey were sent to bilingual individuals who had mastered both languages in order to ensure that the questionnaire asked equivalent questions in each language. The instrument was reviewed by professional university professors. After the translation was completed, a pilot test was conducted with 12 individuals who had characteristics similar to study participants in order to provide feedback about clarity and ease of understanding. All 12 people completed the instrument and gave satisfactory comments about it and its questions. To examine the instrument's reliability, an estimate of the Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the survey responses. The result of that calculation was 0.91, indicating high reliability for the survey questions.

Data Analyses

The researchers used descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Also, the T-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post-hoc Scheffe test were utilized to describe and to analyze data.

Findings

This study's findings are based on 160 responses collected using the online tool in Google drive. The survey was emailed to 463 possible participants: 89 males and 374 females. The sample consisted of 31.3% male (n = 50) and 68.8% female (n = 110) participants. The demographic section, part one of the survey, gathered data about gender and age. The survey's second section had five motivational domains: (a) social contact, (b) family togetherness, (c) social stimulation, (d) cognitive interest, and (e) religious stimulation.

Findings for Research Question One

To answer research question one, means and standard deviations for the motivation factors which influence adult learners at the Yanbu adult-education schools were used. According to the data in Table 2, the means ranged between 2.52 and 3.50. The highest-ranked items pertaining to motivation were part of the religious stimulation (internal motivation). This finding indicates that religious stimulation is the most important factor that influences the participation of adult learners at the Yanbu adult-education schools. The mean for this factor was 3.50. Cognitive interest (internal motivation) was the second most important motivator, with a mean of 3.47. On the other hand, social contact, with a mean of 2.52, was ranked last.

Table 2

The Mean and Standard Deviation of the Five Motivational Factors

Rank	#	Motivational Factors	Mean	Std. D.	Level
5		Religious stimulation (Intrinsic Motivation)	3.50	.758	1
1		Cognitive Interest (Intrinsic Motivation)	3.47	.585	2
3		Family Togetherness	3.40	.555	3
4		Social Stimulation	2.94	.802	4
2		Social Contact	2.52	.884	5
		Total Score	3.11	.519	

Findings for Research Question Two

To answer research question two, T-test was performed to ascertain if there was a statistically significant difference, based on gender, for the adult learners' motivation at the Yanbu adult-education schools. The independent sample T-test results showed a statistically significant difference in family togetherness, social stimulation, and cognitive interest due to gender favoring females. Also, a one-way ANOVA was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference, based on the age variable, for the motivation factors which influence adult learners. The findings for the independent sample T-Test results are shown in Tables 3.

Table 3

Independent T- test Result for Gender

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. D.	t	df	Sig.																																																								
Cognitive Interest	Male	50	3.24	.580	3.374	158	.001																																																								
	Female	110	3.57	.561				Social Contact	Male	50	2.33	.713	1.791	158	.075	Female	110	2.60	.943	Family Togetherness	Male	50	3.19	.707	3.254	158	.001	Female	110	3.49	.443	Social Stimulation	Male	50	2.56	.844	4.203	158	.000	Female	110	3.11	.724	Religious Stimulation	Male	50	3.42	.888	-.865	158	.389	Female	110	3.53	.692	Total Score	Male	50	2.88	.577	4.036	158	.000
Social Contact	Male	50	2.33	.713	1.791	158	.075																																																								
	Female	110	2.60	.943				Family Togetherness	Male	50	3.19	.707	3.254	158	.001	Female	110	3.49	.443	Social Stimulation	Male	50	2.56	.844	4.203	158	.000	Female	110	3.11	.724	Religious Stimulation	Male	50	3.42	.888	-.865	158	.389	Female	110	3.53	.692	Total Score	Male	50	2.88	.577	4.036	158	.000	Female	110	3.22	.454								
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As can be seen from Table 4, a one-way ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference, based on the age variable, for social contact, social stimulation, and cognitive interest.

Table 4

Summary of the One-Way ANOVA Table for Age

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Cognitive Interest	Between Groups	6.553	2	3.276	10.735	.000
	Within Groups	47.919	157	.305		
	Total	54.472	159			
Social Contact	Between Groups	5.278	2	2.639	3.480	.033
	Within Groups	119.033	157	.758		
	Total	124.311	159			

Table 4 summary of the One-Way ANOVA Table for Age (continued)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Family Togetherness	Between Groups	1.717	2	.858	2.853	.061
	Within Groups	47.233	157	.301		
	Total	48.950	159			
Social Stimulation	Between Groups	13.505	2	6.752	11.931	.000
	Within Groups	88.856	157	.566		
	Total	102.360	159			
Religious Stimulation	Between Groups	.095	2	.048	.082	.921
	Within Groups	91.153	157	.581		
	Total	91.248	159			
Total Score	Between Groups	3.553	2	1.776	7.105	.001
	Within Groups	39.248	157	.250		

To explore the differences among the age groups, post-hoc tests were used. The post-hoc analysis showed the existence of significant differences at the .05 level between the age group for people who were less than 30 and both age groups for people who were 30-40 and over 40. The differences favored both the 30-40 and over 40 age groups for cognitive interest. There were also significant differences at the .05 level between the age groups for people who were less than 30 and over 40. The differences favored the less than 30 group for social contact. Finally, there were significant differences at the .05 level between the age groups of people who were 30-40 and over 40. The differences favored the 30-40 group for social stimulation. The result of the post-hoc is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Post-Hoc Comparisons Results by Age

		Mean	Less than 30	30-40	> 40
Cognitive Interest	Less than 30	3.13			
	30-40	3.64	.52*		
	> 40	3.45	.32*	.19	
Social Contact	Less than 30	2.67			
	30-40	2.62	.05		
	> 40	2.24	.43*	.38	
Social stimulation	Less than 30	2.93			
	30-40	3.20	.28		
	> 40	2.52	.40	.68*	

Discussion and Conclusion

This study's main purpose is to identify adult learners' motives to pursue learning at Saudi Arabia' Yanbu adult-education schools. The study also investigated if there is a difference, by gender, by age, and among the learners' perceptions, about both the internal and external motivation. The people included in this research were both males and females who were studying at the Yanbu adult-education schools. This project is important for Saudi Arabia' decision makers because it may help them to reform adult-education programs in a way consistently that matches adults' current motivations. This study focused on the primary motivational factors for adult learners at the Yanbu adult-education schools to learn. The five motivators represented by this study were (a) social contact, (b) family togetherness, (c) social stimulation, (d) cognitive interest, and (e) religious stimulation. The questionnaire contained a four-point Likert Scale, "no influence," "little influence," "moderate influence," and "much influence" as options for the responses.

Generally, the study's findings confirmed the importance of the five motivators for the adult learners at Saudi Arabia's Yanbu adult-education schools. However, this study indicated that adult learners are more motivated by internal, rather than external motivation. These research findings are consistent with Knowles et al (2012) who emphasized that adults are more motivated by internal pressures to learn. Additionally, Pintrich et al. (2007) educators indicate that internal motivation to be more attractive and to result in better learning outcomes than external motivation

Religious stimulation had the highest mean, greatly influencing students at the Yanbu adult-education schools. The majority of the adult learners said that they attend classes to learn for several reasons, including "to read the Holy Quran" and "to know my religious duties". Some people engage in learning for religious reasons because they expect rewards after this life or even in this life. In the Holy Quran, we find the statement: "Read in the name of your Lord who created. Created human from a clinging substance. Read, and your Lord is the most Generous. Who taught by the pen. Taught human that which he knew not" (Quran, n.d., Al-Alaq, Verses 1-5, p. 597). This passage encourages people to

learn by reading. Also, the Holy Quran has many parables to teach people; for instance, “We have certainly presented for the people in this Qur'an from every [kind of] example” (Quran, n.d., Az-Zumar, Verses 27-28, p. 461). Cognitive interest was the second most-important motivator for the students at Saudi Arabia’ Yanbu adult-education schools. This result is consistent with Nolot (2011) who found that adults pursue continuing education for the sake of knowledge and to get something meaningful from life. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to encourage adult learners to utilize a self-directed learning method by determining their goals and the purposes for their learning instead of relying on instructors.

On the other hand, this research also revealed that adult learners at the Yanbu adult-education schools are least likely to be motivated by social stimulation and social contact. This result is consistent with Nolot’s (2011) findings that found that overcoming the frustration of day-to-day living and meeting different people were rated as less influential than other motivators. It is my interpretation that, when people are older, they already have social relationships, so they may have less need for social contact through educational activities.

The second question showed that, due to gender, there is a statistically significant difference in family togetherness, social stimulation, and cognitive interest. The direction benefits females. In terms of family togetherness, this result is a logical because, usually, women are more capable of taking care of children. The General Authority for Statistics (2017) showed that the number of unemployed Saudi women was higher than the number for men, with women recording a rate of 32.7% while the male rate was 7.4%. Therefore, women may be more motivated for cognitive interest in order to continue their learning. Because unemployed women were higher than the number for men, they may motive for social stimulation.

Additionally, the result indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in cognitive interest for both the 30-40 and over 40 age groups. This result confirmed that when people grow up, they become more conscious about the importance of self-knowledge. Also, there was a statistically significant difference in social contact for the less than 30 group. Usually, young adults are more interested in meeting new people and making friends. Teachers at the Yanbu adult-education schools should consider to the five motivators, especially cognitive interest and religious stimulation which represent internal motivations, when teaching adults. Additionally, qualitative research should be utilized to gain deeper understanding about the reasons that influence adult learners regarding the motivation.

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