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**A Study on Motivation Strategies for Elder Adults Continuing Learning in Senior Citizens Learning Camp**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the motivations of elder adults who continuing participated in a Senior Citizens Learning Camp in New Taipei City of Taiwan as a reference for senior citizens. A modified MSLQ was applied for study the learning motivation of elder adults. Total of 67 copies were collected. The majority of members were female, well-educated. In particular, participants of the study had very high levels of education. Almost 75% of respondents possessed undergraduate or advanced degrees. Many of the participants were retired over 15 years. They enjoy educational and cultural benefits offered by the camps. The main reason for elder learners to continue learning is to full fill the need of and surmount oneself. They believe that keep learning will help people to maintain their mind in health, and full fill their self-satisfaction; plus, various courses attract people's interest to learning. A further analysis, compare with the perception to the life and involving in the working field, students' feedback is more positive towards inner motivation, external expectation, and giving back to the community. Over all, findings from this study indicated the motivation among participants who enrolled in senior citizen learning camp are diverse. The motivation for those who attended the learning camps over 6 years is regarding affective components; while for those who attended the learning camps 4-5 years is more about value components motivation; in addition, those who attended the learning camp 2-3 years are more motivated by expectancy components. In conclusion, reflection and giving back to the community are the main key to the learning motivation, which gives the senior learners a clear picture to the relationship between learning and the quality of life more.

*Keywords:* MSLQ, elder adults, elder learners, learning motivation

### Introduction

With the aging of the global population structure, many countries are facing the challenge of aging populations at different levels. The health status of the middle-aged and elderly people has improved, while the average life expectancy is continuing increasing (National Statistics, R.O.C., 2018; United Nations, 2010). Many literatures suggest that learning has become an important way to improve the quality of life of elder adults. The number of elder adults involved in formal or informal education programs is increasing (Danner, Danner, & Kuder, 1993; Yi-Yin, Lin, 2011; Pearse, 1991).

Due to the rapid increase in the elderly population, the provision of educational opportunities for the elderly is an urgent need. Therefore, various types of elderly education are springing up, such as the Senior Citizens Learning Camp (SCLC), tourism learning, and the Evergreen Academy. Various programs are established, and the number of participants is growing. Above situation reveals the importance and the need of lifelong learning for retirees.

Lifelong learning programs has been in process in many countries such as France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Japan. In France, the University of the Third Age which is an elder-age education program designed for improving the living standards and conditions of the elderly. Subsequently, countries around the world have also provided rich teaching resources and opportunities for senior education. The concept of a third-age university in the United Kingdom is to enable the elderly to discover their own insights and wisdom. In other words, in the senior education programs, the elderly can learn how to redefine the meaning of life from their life experience, also achieve the realm of unified personality. In the United States, some senior education programs is cooperated with university space and resources to provide more learning opportunities for senior citizens. This type of operation has so far exceeded 40 years. In addition, Japan's elderly universities are fairly common and constantly expanding. There are also studies proves that the most important factor to improve senior adults' life quality is social connection. Therefore, the major function of senior education programs is to re-establish people's relationships rather than simply gaining knowledge or skills. In other words, it is important for senior learning programs to provide opportunities for senior adults to exam their insight values, improve self-efficiency, and establish social net-work.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the motivations of elder adults who continuing participated in a Senior Citizens Learning Camp in New Taipei City of Taiwan as a reference for senior citizens.

### Literature Reviews

Many studies have shown that cognitive interest and desire learning are the main motivations for senior adults to learn, either in non-formal education (Bynum & Seaman, 1993; Kim & Merriam, 2004; Scala, 1996) or formal education (Jones, 2000). A study showed that, for elder adults, their interest and expectations in learning is higher than the middle-aged learners (O'Connor, 1987). These interest and expectations become a strong motivations for senior adults to attain a senior learning program.

### Elder adults' motivation for learning

Social interaction is an important motivation for the senior adults to attain a senior learning programs (Kim & Merriam, 2004). Study from Mulenga and Liang (2008) exhibited that senior learners preferred to attain senior learning programs within a university's learning environment. It is important for them to establish contact with young students. Some said learning with the younger generation make them feel younger and gain a sense of well-being. In general, most studies show that the motivation for senior learners is toward the inside. Also studies indicate that elder adult learners exhibit intrinsic motivation compared to young adult learners in higher education (O'Connor, 1987 ; Lin, 2011 ; Lee & Yeh , 2014).

In addition, personal growth and satisfaction are motivational learning for senior adults. Some studies have found that these motivations are particularly prominent. Pourchot (1999) shows that the participation of senior adults in higher education seems to be both a response to higher education and the need for personal development. Little (1995) found that the purpose of seniors seeking higher education degrees include improving self-esteem, reducing some of the adverse effects of aging, promoting a sense of self-esteem, and providing new focus in times of sadness.

Motivation refers to the intrinsic motivating action that causes individual activity, maintains the activity, and promotes the activity towards a certain goal. Motivation is the most complex psychological characteristic of human beings. It is not only the focus of psychological research, but also a place in education. Motivation can be used as an important indicator of individual learning achievement. Therefore, to understand the motivation needs of learners is important for designing appropriate senior learning programs that may increase the willingness of senior citizens to learn and improve their lives.

### Instrument

There are two kinds of measurement tools for learning motivation: the ARCS mode and the MSLQ mode. In this study, MSLQ model was used as a scale. The MSLQ model is a motivational learning strategy model. It refers to dividing the learning history into two parts, motivated and cognitive, and compiling Motivated Strategies for Learning

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Questionnaire (MSLQ), which contains values, expectations, and emotions. Three items, the contents of the scale are outlined below:

First, the value component: The learner's belief in the importance and value of learning and the reasons for engaging in learning, including the learner's inner orientation, external orientation and life value. The goal orientation is learning activities because of sophisticated, challenging, hobbies, and curiosity; the external goal orientation is learning activities because of the external value of achievement, reward, and other people's approval; the work value is the value of the learning work. The assessment includes three types of assessments that individuals believe are important, useful, and interesting.

Second, the expectations component: Confidence in the belief and control of self-achieving ability or skill of learning work and expected success of learning work, including the control belief of learning, self-efficacy of learning, and expectation of success. The control belief of learning refers to learners' induction of success or failure of learning results. Learning self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's performance ability in a particular learning activity. The stronger the faith, the higher the success expectation and persistence. Expectation of success refers to the grasp of the probability of success or failure in a particular job.

Third, affective components (affective components): The emotional response to learning work, learning outcomes or self-learning ability, its main connotation is test anxiety, that is, the learner has to worry about fear before the exam or the exam.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to understand the continue learning motivation of the elderly. Totally 67 students who aged over 55-year-old attended this study. The subjects in this study are students who enrolled in the senior citizens learning camp, New Taipei city, Taiwan, more than two years.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section one is socio-demographic information, also seen as independent variables in this study, which include length of continue learns, gender, age, level of education, and lengths of retire. The second section of the questionnaire was a modified version of Pintrich, Smith, Mckeachie (1989) Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). Questions in this section were about participants' reasons (motives) for enrolling in the senior citizens learning camp. The elder adults MSLQ was developed to measure the elder learners' learning motivation. For the elder participants' convenience, this instrument was designed as a 10-item Multiple choice questions.

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The modified final version of the MSLQ used in this study, elder adults MSLQ, contained three factors: (1) value components, (2) expectations components, and (3) affective components.

### Sample and Data Collection

The sample consisted of all individuals who, during the year prior to the research, had joined the senior citizens learning camp (see Table 1). More than half of the students who have studied for more than 4 years accounted for 57.5%, 83.6% were female, 62.7% aged 61-70, 74.6% senior high school or above, and the retirement age was evenly distributed, of which more than 15 years accounted for 23.9%. The length has nothing to do with the willingness to learn.

Table 1  
*Profile of Participants (N = 67)*

Variable	Measure	f	%
Years enrolled in this program	2-3	29	43.3
	4-5	33	49.3
	Over 6	5	7.5
Gender	Female	10	14.9
	Male	56	83.6
	missing	1	1.5
Age	51~60	10	14.9
	61~70	42	62.7
	71~80	10	14.9
	Over 80	2	3.0
	missing	3	4.5
Education	Elementary school	10	14.9
	Junior high school	5	7.5
	Senior high school	21	31.3
	College/university	29	43.3
	missing	2	3.0
Length of retire	1-2	10	14.9
	3-5	10	14.9
	6-10	12	17.9
	10-15	11	16.4
	over15	16	23.9
	missing	8	11.9

**Results**

The answer design method of the questionnaire has been selected to ask why it continued to learn. Up to 82.1% of the respondents answered that they can keep learning and can get together with friends, 80.6% of people think that learning new knowledge allows them to continue their studies, 79.1% of courses are rich, followed by It is 71.6% that I feel satisfied at the university, and inspire new skills and ideas also over 60% in Table 2.

Among, maybe we choice the case Senior Citizens Learning Camp was an industrial and commercial management university, the factors due to nutrition and physical health were low, with only 47.8% selected. In addition, the social and family stimulation factor is very low, only 24.8%, indicating that the continuous learning is more spontaneous.

Table 2  
*Frequency Distribution Table of Learning Motivation*

Motivation	Item	f	(%)	rank
value components	keep learning	55	82.10%	1
	learning new knowledge	54	80.60%	3
	multivariate curriculum	53	79.10%	4
expectancy components	inspire new skills	19	67.20%	8
	inspire ideas	41	61.20%	7
	going to university is a kind of satisfaction	48	71.60%	5
	nutrition and physical health	32	47.80%	9
affective components	campus is very friendly	48	71.60%	5
	gather with friends	55	82.10%	1
	Social and family stimulation	19	24.80%	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>419</b>	<b>636.80%</b>	

Over all, findings (see Table 3) from this study indicated the motivation among participants who enrolled in senior citizen learning camp are diverse. The motivation for those who attended the learning camps over 6 years is regarding affective components; while for those who attended the learning camps 4-5 years is more about value components motivation; in addition, those who attended the learning camp 2-3 years are more motivated by expectancy components.

Table 3

*Cross Table of Motivation by Years Enrolled in This Program (%)*

Motivation	Item	2-3 years (n = 29)		4-5 years (n = 33)		6+ years (n = 5)	
		p	M	p	M	p	M
Value components	keep learning	72.41	71.26	87.88	87.88	100.00	86.67
	learning new knowledge	75.86		84.85		80.00	
	multivariate curriculum	65.52		90.91		80.00	
Expectancy components	inspire new skills	82.76	78.45	54.55	47.73	60.00	60.00
	inspire ideas	79.31		45.45		60.00	
	going to university is a kind of satisfaction	86.21		60.61		60.00	
Affective components	nutrition and physical health	65.52		30.30		60.00	
	campus is very friendly	79.31	64.37	60.61	53.54	100.00	86.67
	gather with friends	86.21		75.76		100.00	
	Social and family stimulation	27.59		24.24		60.00	

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The findings of the research reported in this paper are consistent with the findings of previous research on the demographic characteristics of elder learners who participate in formal learning activities. The majority of members were female, well-educated. In particular, participants of the study had very high levels of education. Almost 75% of respondents possessed undergraduate or advanced degrees. Many of the participants were retired over 15 years. They enjoy educational and cultural benefits offered by the camps.

The study provide additional support to the robust relationship between former educational attainment and educational participation among the elderly (Fisher, 1986; Manheimer Snodgrass, & Moskow-Mckenzie,, 1995). Those elder adults have had past success with learning and they tend to continue to engage in learning activities. Because the level of education among elder adults is increasing, these well-educated elder adults will make up an even greater part of adult education in the future.

This study confirms that elder learners are more influenced by value components to engage in learning than by any other factors. Apparently the educated mind seeks to satisfy intellectual curiosity. Highly educated elderly people who want stimulating activities participate in learning activities because they are interested in knowledge itself and find learning joyful.

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This finding has a practical implication for program planning for elder adults. When developing programs for elder adults, program planners and administrators need to include elder learners' keeping learns and needs into learning opportunities. This research also revealed that continuing participants are least likely to be motivated by Social Stimulation. Interestingly, level of education predicts Social and family Stimulation negatively.

Several recommendations for further research emerge from the findings. While many quantitative studies have been conducted on elder adult education, far fewer qualitative studies have been conducted among this population. Qualitative research can bring a deeper understanding of elder adult participation in education and enable future inquiries into the underlying motives of elder adults.

This study focused on educated elder adults who are attracted to the case of senior citizens learning camp.. There is a need to investigate elder adult participation in different settings in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the participation and motivation patterns of this increasingly large and diverse group of adult learners. Much of the research on elder adult learning, including this study, has focused on New Taipei City who can afford continuing education. More studies are needed regarding historically underrepresented elder populations such as the poor, minorities, and immigrants to identify deterrents to their participation in educational activities.

In summary, the present study supports the previous motivation studies on elder adult learning. The main reason for elder learners to continue learning is to full fill the need of and surmount oneself. They believe that keep learning will help people to maintain their mind in health, and full fill their self-satisfaction; plus, various courses attract people's interest to learning. A further analysis, compare with the perception to the life and involving in the working field, students' feedback is more positive towards inner motivation, external expectation, and giving back to the community. In conclusion, reflection and giving back to the community are the main key to the learning motivation, which gives the senior learners a clear picture to the relationship between learning and the quality of life more. Assessing motivation is an important area of practice as well as research. By recognizing motivations of elder learners, educators and administrators can attract more elderly students to lifelong learning activities.

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