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LIFELONG LEARNING BARRIERS: A THEORETICAL RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
Being a lifelong learner for the whole life is an essential objective for an adult. However, it is not easy to achieve because of certain factors. These factors are defined as "barriers" in the literature. Every adult may have encountered some of these barriers to some extent in their life. Types of these barriers or the level of effect may show differences. This study aims to comprehensively address barriers that have been defined in various ways in separate sources in the literature. Therefore, this research is designed as a theoretical study. In other words, the current research discusses the barriers to lifelong learning identified in the literature. It provides an overview of the factors preventing adults from participating in lifelong learning activities. The keywords "lifelong learning" and "barriers" have been searched in the Scopus, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate databases. As a result, the barriers that are most frequently mentioned in the related literature were chosen and were studied in detail in this study. These barriers are; lack of interest and motivation, lack of time, being too old, cost, family constraints, socio-economic group, and lack of self-confidence.	

1. Introduction

The importance of lifelong learning has become increasingly significant due to the rapid changes observed in careers, scientific advancements, and technological progress (Bryce, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Koper & Tattersall, 2004; Pak, 2012). Therefore, adults face challenges in adapting to the changing landscape. With the job market being highly competitive, there is a constant need for individuals to update their skills to stay employed. Beyond professional spheres, lifelong learning has become a daily necessity in our lives. It is critical for individuals, aiding in crime reduction, refreshing competencies, fostering social cohesion, and contributing to equitable income distribution (Demirel, 2005; Kaplan, 2016).

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In pursuing personal and professional development, lifelong learning is a powerful instrument, allowing individuals to grow, adapt, and thrive in an ever-evolving world. The significance of lifelong learning has been well-documented, with substantial research showing its positive impact on career prospects, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life (Aksoy, 2008; Ersoy, 2009). However, despite the benefits that lifelong learning brings, the participation level of adults in lifelong learning is relatively low.

In 2022, data from Eurostat revealed adult participation levels in learning across Europe. The survey table, which describes the Adult participation in learning from 2019 to 2022 (% of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training in the last four weeks is shared below. While it indicated positive trends in the overall participation rate in lifelong learning, it also revealed that certain groups' access to learning opportunities remains unequal (Eurostat, 2022). Low participation of some groups of adults in certain countries revealed the necessity of understanding and addressing barriers that adults face when seeking to engage in lifelong learning activities. Especially in our country, the participation rate is shallow, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of adults participating in formal and non-formal education and training in the last four weeks from 2019 to 2022

	Total				Men				Women			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
EU	10.8	9.1	10.8	11.9	9.8	8.3	10.0	10.8	11.9	10.0	11.6	12.9
Belgium	8.2	7.4	10.2	10.3	7.7	7.1	10.0	9.7	8.6	7.7	10.4	10.9
Bulgaria	2.0	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.4	1.7	1.6	2.1	1.7	1.9	1.8
Czechia	8.1	5.5	5.8	9.4	8.1	5.6	5.6	9.3	8.1	5.5	5.9	9.4
Denmark	25.3	20.0	22.3	27.9	20.7	16.4	18.1	23.6	30.0	23.6	26.6	32.2
Germany	8.2	7.7	7.7	8.1	8.3	7.8	7.7	7.9	8.1	7.5	7.7	8.4
Estonia	19.6	16.6	18.4	21.1	16.3	12.6	14.4	16.7	22.9	20.6	22.5	25.5
Ireland	12.6	11.0	13.6	11.8	10.7	9.2	12.0	10.3	14.5	12.6	15.2	13.2
Greece	3.9	4.1	3.5	3.5	3.7	4.3	3.5	3.2	4.2	4.0	3.4	3.8
Spain	10.6	11.0	14.4	15.3	9.5	9.9	12.7	13.5	11.7	12.0	16.0	17.0
France	19.5	13.0	11.0	13.3	16.7	11.2	9.9	11.4	22.2	14.6	12.1	15.1
Croatia	3.5	3.2	5.1	4.4	3.2	2.6	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.8	6.4	5.0
Italy	8.1	7.2	9.9	9.6	7.7	7.0	9.8	9.4	8.6	7.4	10.0	9.9
Cyprus	5.9	4.7	9.7	10.5	5.6	4.9	9.9	10.4	6.2	4.5	9.5	10.5
Latvia	7.4	6.6	8.6	9.7	5.4	4.6	5.5	6.6	9.3	8.4	11.5	12.5
Lithuania	7.0	7.2	8.5	8.5	5.5	5.6	6.7	6.8	8.5	8.7	10.2	10.2
Luxembourg	19.1	16.3	17.9	18.1	19.7	15.3	17.4	16.9	18.5	17.3	18.3	19.3
Hungary	5.8	5.1	5.9	7.9	5.6	4.4	5.8	6.7	6.0	5.7	5.9	9.2
Malta	11.9	11.0	13.9	12.8	10.7	9.6	12.9	12.1	13.4	12.6	14.9	13.6
Netherlands	19.5	18.8	26.6	26.4	18.5	17.9	25.7	25.2	20.4	19.8	27.5	27.5
Austria	14.7	11.7	14.6	15.8	13.1	10.8	13.3	14.4	16.3	12.7	15.8	17.2
Poland	4.8	3.7	5.4	7.6	4.2	3.1	5.0	7.0	5.4	4.3	5.9	8.3
Portugal	10.5	10.0	12.9	13.8	10.3	9.6	12.0	13.2	10.7	10.4	13.7	14.2
Romania	1.3	1.0	4.9	5.4	1.4	1.0	5.2	5.6	1.2	1.0	4.7	5.2
Slovenia	11.2	8.4	18.9	21.6	9.7	7.4	17.4	20.1	12.8	9.5	20.6	23.2
Slovakia (²)	3.6	2.8	4.8	12.8	3.6	2.6	4.6	12.9	3.6	3.0	4.9	12.8
Finland	29.0	27.3	30.5	25.2	24.8	23.0	25.5	20.9	33.3	31.7	35.8	29.7
Sweden	34.3	28.6	34.7	36.2	26.1	21.9	28.3	29.4	42.9	35.5	41.4	43.2
Iceland (')	22.2	20.3	23.9	27.1	18.8	16.8	19.3	22.2	25.7	24.1	28.8	32.5
Norway	19.3	16.4	19.5	21.1	17.7	15.0	18.0	19.2	21.0	17.9	21.2	23.1
Switzerland	32.3	7.6	22.8	22.0	33.2	28.5	22.6	21.8	31.3	26.7	22.9	22.2
Montenegro	2.5	2.7			2.1	2.6			3.0	2.8		
North Macedonia	2.8	2.6			2.8	2.5			2.7	2.7		
Serbia	4.3	3.7	4.8	5.2	3.8	3.3	4.2	4.4	4.8	4.0	5.4	5.9
Turkiye	5.7	5.8			5.7	6.0			5.7	5.5		

The term lifelong learning barriers typically refers to a persistent or enduring obstacle or challenge a person faces throughout their life. These barriers can take various forms, such as physical, social, economic, or psychological, and they can significantly hinder an individual's ability to achieve their goals, fulfill their potential, or participate fully in society (Cross,1981). Lifelong learning barriers are often related to factors like disabilities, discrimination, economic disadvantage, or chronic health conditions, and they require ongoing efforts to overcome. Addressing and removing these obstacles is vital to promote equality, inclusion, and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their circumstances (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

Morris, Steinmüller and Rohs (2022) conducted research with 521 adults aged between 17 and 64 years in Germany. Their study can be considered region-specific because they studied in a district with one of the lowest participation rates in Germany. They discovered two main barriers that hinder adults from attending lifelong learning activities. One barrier originates from personal factors, and the other originates from work factors. Work-related factors have two dimensions: funding and timing. Personal factors include split curriculum, flexibility when to start, short travel distance to attend the course, conversion of professional experience into academic credits, communication, and certificates. (Morris, Steinmüller & Rohs, 2022).

Examining these barriers aims to shed light on adults' challenges and provide insights into how they can overcome them. This knowledge can pave the way for more inclusive, equitable, and accessible lifelong learning opportunities, ensuring that individuals from different groups use continued education (Gorard & Smith, 2007). To help adults overcome lifelong learning barriers, we must first recognize the various factors contributing to these barriers and understand their interconnected nature. With this foundation in place, we can work towards a future where individuals can embark on their lifelong learning journey with confidence and enthusiasm, regardless of their challenges (Egglestone et al., 2018).

2. Method

This research theoretically addresses lifelong learning barriers based on studies in the related literature. Theoretical research is an academic paper that introduces a novel framework or theory for comprehending a specific issue or occurrence (Cihangir Tetik, 2021). Such research aims to provide a theoretical structure that can be used to steer further research and advance knowledge in a particular field. Prior literature and a discussion of how the theory can be put into practice in practical situations are presented in theoretical research. In this context, the current research reviews the barriers to lifelong learning cited in the literature. Keywords "lifelong learning," "obstacle," and "barriers to participation" were searched in the Google Scholar, Scopus, and ResearchGate databases. Only articles from the last four decades were considered, resulting in 282 identified studies. Among these, only those directly addressing and defining barriers were considered. Studies from outside the field of educational sciences were not included in the research. Consequently, 82 studies, consisting of articles, books, and reports, were included in the research. The barriers identified in these studies are presented in the findings section of this research. To accomplish that, factors that hinder adults' participation in lifelong learning activities were explained in this article. After finding articles titled "Barrier" and "Lifelong Learning Barrier," these barriers are tried to be explained. It is crucial that the information gathered from documents is comprehensive and presented clearly for the results to be credible (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Therefore, direct quotations from articles have also been included in this research.

2.1. Reliability and Validity

Validity and reliability are critical aspects of research and measurement methods. Without ensuring the validity of a study, the results and conclusions drawn from it may be inaccurate or misleading (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). Similarly, without establishing the reliability of the data collection and measurement techniques, the results cannot be considered trustworthy or consistent. It is essential to use reliable and valid sources in order to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the information

presented. "The validity and reliability of this research play a crucial role in evaluating the Accuracy of the methodological approach and the reliability of the obtained findings. From the perspective of validity, the methods employed in this study, including literature review and an analytical framework focusing on identified barrier factors, are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject (Bull et al., 2019). The data obtained within the scope of the research have been carefully selected from relevant sources to support validity and have been analyzed accordingly. Additionally, the literature review conducted using keywords to enhance the reliability of the research has played a significant role in confirming the scope and focus of the study (Moskal & Leydens, 2019). Regarding reliability, the data collection tools and analytical methods used in this study have been regularly reviewed, ensuring consistency throughout the process. In conclusion, the validity and reliability of the research demonstrate that the results, based on a robust methodological foundation, are scientifically valuable."

3. Results and discussions

As soon as articles in the literature are reviewed, it is realized that there are different barrier types and diverging definitions for those barriers. The lifelong learning barriers and the studies used to identify them are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The lifelong learning barriers and the related research studied

LLLB	Related Research
Lack of interest and motivation	Knud, 2005; Cross, 1981; McGivney, 2014; Hanson et al., 2007; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Hillage, & Aston, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; OECD 2012; Roosmaa & Saar, 2011.
Lack of time	Cross, 1981; McGivney, 2014; Hanson et al., 2007; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Scanlan & Darkenwald, 1984; Boudioni et al., 2007); ; Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Poyraz & Titrek, 2013; Gorard & Smith, 2007; Chuang, 2015; Boeren, 2011; Raymer, 2022 ; Hall et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2022; Hunter-Johnson, 2017.
Being too old	Cross, 1981; McGivney, 2014 ; Norman & Hyland, 2003; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Boudioni et al., 2007; Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Poyraz & Titrek, 2013; Falasca, 2011; Boeren, 2011; Hall et al., 2021.
Cost	Longworth, 2003; Cross, 1981; McGivney, 2014; Hanson et al., 2007; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Hillage, & Aston, 2001; OECD, 2012; Boudioni et al., 2007; Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Poyraz & Titrek, 2013; Gorard & Smith, 2007; Chuang, 2015; Boeren, 2011; Raymer, 2022; Pennacchia et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2022; Hunter-Johnson, 2017.
Famılıy constraınt	Cross, 1981; McGivney, 2014 ; Hanson et al., 2007; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; OECD, 2012; Boudioni et al., 2007; Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Gorard & Smith, 2007; Chuang, 2015 ; Boeren, 2011; Raymer, 2022; Pennacchia et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2022; Hunter-Johnson, 2017.
Socıo-economıc group	Norman & Hyland, 2003; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Gorard & Smith, 2007; Raymer, 2022 ; Morris et al., 2022.
Lack of self-confıdence	Norman & Hyland, 2003; Hillage, & Aston, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Boeren, 2011; Raymer, 2022 ; Pennacchia et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2021.

As is seen in the table, some of the most common leading barriers (LLLB) in the literature are lack of time, previous failures, lack of interest, being too old, having poor health, being out at night, transportation, absence of a companion, lack of information about what is available, fear of

competition with younger adults, fear of the unknown and location, educational background, lack of computer access. Among these barriers, "cost" was the most cited barrier, while "socio-economic group" was the least cited. The relevant barriers have been examined in light of the respective studies below.

3.1 Lack of Interest and Motivation

People generally do not give enough importance to learning new information or acquiring new skills in daily life. In other words, learners do not appreciate the value of learning. We have solid habits and live by what we have learned (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Although the desire and motive for lifelong learning activities are low, it can be said that research participants have a positive attitude toward being lifelong learners in general. However, their perception of specific lifelong learning tasks is less favorable, such as identifying learning objectives and evaluating learning outcomes (Hanson et al., 2007).

What motivates adults to learn? Work reasons, career-related reasons, job improvement, interest in a subject, leisure, personal interests, getting a recognized qualification, and developing as a person are some factors that motivate adults to learn. According to research results, 75% of adults generally learn for work and career-related reasons, 24% for leisure or personal interest (Egglestone et al., 2018).

When the participation level of adults is considered, it is evident that age is an important variable. While older and retired adults are motivated to learn for leisure or personal reasons, younger adults under 35 and employed adults are motivated to learn for job and career-related reasons. According to research results, in general, 27% of adults learn to develop themselves as a person, 27% to help improve in their job, 26% because of an interest in the subject, 24% to get a recognized qualification, and 22% to enjoy (Egglestone et al., 2018).

Moreover, the motive not to participate in lifelong learning activities may differ by country. In new EU member countries like Estonia, 50% of people state that they do not need to participate in lifelong learning activities for job-related or personal reasons. However, in old EU countries, one-third of people did not participate because of job-related reasons, and 40% claimed personal reasons (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011)

One of the most influential barrier categories to participation in lifelong learning is dispositional barriers. Dispositional barriers can be described as those caused by an adult's negative feelings against learning. Self-confidence, attitudes about the benefits of learning, attitudes about self that may adversely affect learning, and prior negative experiences in learning activities are other factors that can be considered among dispositional barriers (Cross, 1981). Adults may feel inadequate in learning or remembering their old lousy school days, and these negative feelings may hinder them from participating in learning activities. That is why dispositional barriers are dominant, especially among older adults, low-educated adults, and low-skilled and blue-collar workers (Rubenson, 2007; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

Dispositional reasons are also intensely compelling in the participation of older adults in lifelong learning activities. Especially adults in their forties and fifties do not want to return to learning. They mostly feel too old, or they do not have the confidence. That is why creating a positive learning environment from initial education is suggested. The classroom environment is vital in helping learners feel confident about learning new information or satisfied when learning new information (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Rubenson, 2007).

Dispositional reasons may even be compelling among younger adults. A study with prospective nurses revealed that students do not want to participate in non-formal education because of a lack of interest. They are not interested in lifelong learning activities, and they have difficulties in organizing and maintaining those activities (Örs & Kılınç, 2017).

Lack of employment opportunities is an essential factor affecting adult motivation in learning. When adults feel the low possibility of finding a job, they lose interest in learning activities. It is about the gain that will be get at the end of the process. An adult will be motivated if he believes participating will end in better and higher-paying work. A monotonous or low-paid job will affect an adult's motivation to participate (Paldanius, 2007).

As it is seen, adults are hesitant to participate when they feel that the gain would be low. Research that focused on people in the labor market revealed that deficient skilled workers cannot find any reason that will raise enthusiasm. The reason for participating in lifelong learning activities is only external expectations by society and educators. To be able to participate in such activities, they need innermost motivation though (Cross, 1981; Hillage, & Aston, 2001; Illeris, 2006; McGivney 1993).

When adults who are already employed are considered, it is seen that workers believe that work and education are two fields that are different from each other. Workers consider education as a threat to their routine. To workers, they are only supposed to produce, and it is not a part of their job to be educated (Carlén, 1999). For non-participant workers, education is something to be over after school. After school days are over, they are in real life, which means getting a job and starting producing, leaving no place for education (Paldanius, 2007).

3.2 Lack of Time

Lack of time is one of the most stated barriers by adults. It is considered under situational factors which affect learner's participation in lifelong learning activities. Situational barriers consist of broad circumstantial conditions that hamper the ability of adult learners to gain access to and pursue educational opportunities, for example, the amount of discretionary resources- time, energy, and finances- the adult learner can or is willing to expend in pursuing learning activities (Cross, 1981).

In Hunter-Johnson's (2017) study, 34% of the participants complained about time problems. When explicitly questioned about how time management was a barrier, it was the consensus of the participants that the ability to manage time was an integral component of the adult learner being successful in higher education (Hunter-Johnson, 2017).

Raymer's (2022) study stated that time management was the most common situational barrier. It is challenging for adults to manage their time when fulfilling family-oriented responsibilities and homework. In that study, it was revealed that many participants were responsible for their child or grandchild. Also, many worked, so they did not concentrate on school. One of the participants said: "*The first semester was a breeze. The second semester popped up; I do not know where time management went; it was like, get your work done on time. You cannot wait until the day off, cannot do that; it will just not work. I have five grandchildren at home. I am taking care of it, so it will not work to wait to do homework*" (Raymer, 2022)

Hall et al. (2021) studied 5054 participants over 17 all over the UK and found that time barriers hinder 18% of adults. However, of the adults who have not participated in any learning in the last three years, this number is 23% of adults (Hall et al., 2021)

Most adults have a low tendency towards lifelong learning due to a lack of time. When asked, many people would say that they do not have time. Work or family obligations leave no time for us to participate in non-formal education, they would say (OECD, 2012; McGivney, 1993; Hanson et al., 2007).

Time constraints can be considered as long working hours or too much responsibility that would leave no time or opportunity to participate in lifelong learning activities. Being that busy makes people think they do not have reflection time for themselves. Time constraints decrease the effect of work and the satisfaction of the workers (Boudioni et al., 2007).

The situation is even worse with the people who own their workplaces. A study done with pharmacists revealed that the scheduling (location, distance, time) of group learning activities barrier

was higher with owner pharmacists when compared with their non-owner colleagues (Hanson et al., 2007).

Most of the learner's lack of time is originated from family responsibilities. About 30% of adults in Estonia and other new EU member countries think they do not have time for lifelong learning because of their family responsibilities. Not only non-participants but also 40% of the learners who intend to participate stated that time problem will hinder their participation (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011).

According to the IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) study, in many countries, about 60% of adults stated that lack of time hinders them from participating in non-work-related education (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

Participating in lifelong learning requires adjustments in an adult's life. That situation is even more complicated with the dependents or with the ones who have long-term relationships. Partners and children worsen the situation for women. They may leave no time for taking a course for women (Abroms & Goldscheider, 2002). Many women feel obligated to give up their careers for the sake of their family that leaves no time for them. In the end, many women end up following the employment patterns of women of an earlier generation. Which means they get a job and try to support their family (Gorard & Smith, 2007).

In many societies, women's traditional role has not changed. Women are still highly responsible for their families whether they work or not. However, with the increasingly competitive business life, all adults are supposed to participate in work-related learning activities that take more time away from family and social life. That is why women are more affected by this burden than men. This burden causes women to be less active in learning activities and less employed throughout Europe (Boeren, 2011; Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010; Chuang, 2015).

3.3 Being Too Old

Older adults have different educational needs than younger ones. They need help making new friends, aging well physically, intellectually, and morally, living in harmony with themselves, developing a sound philosophy and psychology on aging, coping with societal changes, establishing good interpersonal relationships, and gaining self-confidence.

Research has shown that adults want the education given to them to be more daily and practical. They expect the education they receive to help them get to know their environment better and to help them adapt better to this environment. This way, they can define themselves better, self-actualize, solve identity crises, and lead a better and happier life. (Leclerc, 1985). Especially undereducated adults prefer education that would help their immediate problems. They also have an interest in adult education for meaningful use of leisure. Another point that raises interest in adult education for older adults is personal health-related information with literacy (Courtenay et al., 1983).

However, our society, traditions, and culture have some judgments and stereotypical misunderstandings about older adults. Adults are exposed to these judgments and misunderstandings for many years. These judgments and misunderstandings create a framework for old age. It is based on the data obtained from this framework while defining themselves when adults get old. Therefore, this identification process becomes a self-defined definition rather than outsourcing when they get old (Fleming, 2021).

The term older, in workplaces is used for adults over 40 years old. Older adults are distinguished and marginalized. Evidence shows that adults over 45 are not included in work-based studies. Adults over 50 are not given jobs or included in voluntary training and activities. Those over the age of 75 are considered to be inadequate in terms of social and health and are not expected to participate in the activities. Therefore, age-based statistical data is needed to determine adult education policies. This data is not for categorizing people but for raising awareness about this discrimination. With this data,

education planners will find ways to involve older adults in adult education by recognizing their needs. (NIACE, 2002).

Being too old is evaluated under the dispositional barrier factor. Dispositional barriers can be defined as adult's attitudes and feelings toward learning. Feeling lonely in the learning society and negatively affected learning abilities due to health and age problems can be evaluated under this heading (Cross, 1981). In a study conducted in Estonia, it is seen that this problem is expressed primarily by adults between the ages of 40-49 and over 50. It was also seen that this adult group believed that education should be done at a younger age. They feel too old to go back to school. Again, this research determined that institutional barriers also affected adults (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Rubenson, 2007). Institutional barriers can be described as the barriers aroused because of the training program itself, such as timing, scheduling, and sequencing of learning opportunities (Cross, 1981).

In light of findings from the survey they applied, Norman and Hyland state that age is an essential factor in distinguishing non-participants from participants in post-school learning. They believe that older people's participation is lower than younger. (Norman & Hyland, 2003; OECD, 2012).

For older adults, there may be very different types of reasons for low participation in non-formal education like being seen as too old, having poor health, being out at night, transportation, absence of a companion, lack of information about what is available, fear of competition with younger adults, fear of the unknown and location. That is why older adults prefer to attend institutions that are accessible and familiar (Price & Lyon, 1982).

With aging, an individual starts losing hearing and seeing abilities. There may also be other illnesses as well. Pain and fatigue are other factors that may affect individuals externally. (Merriam & Caffarella 1999; Cross, 1981; McGivney 1993).

3.4 Cost

Costs of registering and purchasing learning materials could be seen as a barrier to learning (Potter & Ferguson, 2003; Hillage & Aston, 2001; Scanlan & Darkenwald, 1984). The terms "Lack of finance" (Longworth, 2003; Cross, 1981; McGivney, 1993), "Funding" (Boudioni et al., 2007; Hanson et al., 2007), and "Financial problems" (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Cumming, 1992; Gaikezheyongai, 2000; Hart et al., 2002; Livingstone, 2002; McGivney, 1999; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2002; Ostermeier, 2003; Potter & Ferguson, 2003; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009) may also refer to the same barrier.

The cost barrier concerns not only adults but also educational institutions and governments' approaches (MacKeracher et al., 2006). Since 1980, the financial support of governments has been decreasing, which has increased wages of education programs to close the gap. For this reason, families and adults have to pay their tuition fees. There is no public funding support for middle and low-income adults, and the support of governments focuses only on the unemployed (Lowe, 2001). Another problem is about who gets what support and how much. The complex and restrictive structure of this issue affects the participation of adults in learning opportunities. (Potter & Ferguson, 2003; OECD, 2002)

Hunter-Johnson's (2017) study included 100 participants. There were 26 males and 74 females between the ages of 25 and 51. In this study, it was revealed that 85% of participants thought that cost was an influential factor while pursuing or attempting to pursue higher education (Hunter-Johnson, 2017)

According to Raymer (2022), financial aid and overall finances were other important factors that hinder participation in lifelong learning activities. In that study, one of the participants said that.

> *I quit working, which put us in an income barrier. Even though we needed that money because we were taking care of my house, we were also taking care of my grandchildren's home. I just wanted to influence my younger children and my grandchildren. I wanted to influence them to*

> *see that education is a good thing, a beautiful thing, it does not need to be a thing that you stop; it can happen all your life if you want it to*" (Raymer,2022, p.71).

Pennacchia, Jones, and Aldridge (2018) argued that cost is both a situational and an institutional barrier. In their research, it was revealed that participants with low income were affected more by cost barriers. In the case of financial support for learning, participants stated that it would have been impossible for them to attend the learning activity. One of the participants stated that: "The biggest block is finance. Of course, the fact that you know, whatever the media might tell you, the benefits for disabled people are very much less than 23 generous, and every penny counts. So, the last thing you can do is spend money on education, however much you might like to." (Pennacchia, Jones & Aldridge, 2018).

Cost can be direct or indirect, such as books, equipment (Hillage & Aston, 2001; Hand et al., 1994), or learning materials (Potter & Ferguson, 2003). The lack of public transport support for adults is a barrier encountered in this regard (Millar & Falk, 2000; Potter& Ferguson, 2003; Reynolds, 2002). Even the childcare costs of parents who want to participate in learning activities should be evaluated within this barrier (McGivney, 1999; OECD, 2002). To have access to learning activities, adults need to overcome the problem of getting resources that are not for free. These resources include tuition fees, computer access, laboratories, paper, books, and so on (Potter & Ferguson, 2003). This lack of organization among certain groups and service providers results in adults working full-time or part-time to be able to participate in training activities part-time or full-time (OECD, 2002).

In qualitative studies, healthcare professionals emphasized that funding barriers significantly affect their participation in learning activities. They also stated that the institutions they work with had little funding support and that they had lengthy and time-consuming procedures to get funding. (Boudioni et al., 2007; Hanson et al., 2007). Another quantitative study revealed that 40% of adults suffer financial difficulties while studying in Estonia and new EU countries. This rate is 27% in Western European countries, though (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011). In studies conducted in North America, adults stated that cost is the most crucial factor affecting their participation in learning activities. According to Eurobarometer data, the biggest obstacle in Europe was also found to be cost. Only 12% -21% of adults stated that they can pay for learning activities, which may vary depending on the purpose of the learning activity. 50% of adults did not want to pay for learning activities in any way (Chisolm et al., 2004, p. 86).

Therefore, public financial support is vital in overcoming the cost barrier. In OECD countries, although lifelong learning participation of adults aged 46 and over is lower than younger, this difference is less in Nordic welfare countries. This situation is due to a publicly funded sector of adult popular education (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

There are also studies in the literature that reveal that women are more disadvantaged in this regard. Indeed, women generally work in lower-income jobs than men, and their employment opportunities are limited. Therefore, they can spend less on training courses. In addition, women work in relatively easy jobs that require less technical knowledge and have fewer opportunities for work-related training. This type of professional discrimination causes women to earn less income and leave less money for their professional development (Boeren, 2011).

3.5 Family Constraint

Although there are cultural differences, many studies reveal that adult family-related responsibilities keep them too busy in their daily lives. Adults devote most of their time and energy to their families. Marriage, childcare, and other daily chores at home, which are adult life tasks, appear as conflicting tasks with work that adults need to overcome, and in the literature, these tasks are seen as a significant factor affecting the level of participation of adults in learning activities. (Chisolm et al., 2004; Cross, 1981; McGivney 1993; Merriam & Caffarella 1999: 56–57; Archibald & Urion, 1995;

Cumming, 1992; Dench & Regan, 2000; Hart et al., 2002; Hanson et al., 2007; Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Boeren, 2011; Hunter-Johnson, 2017).

Pennacchia et al. (2018) revealed that lack of childcare support is one of the most cited barriers by adults. It is worse with women who have small children. Having children leaves no time for attending courses. It also prevents adults from focusing on learning. Adults must choose learning opportunities that fit their childcare program rather than their interests. One of the participants stated, "*I had even looked at hairdressing or a nail course because they were the right times, but it is like, 'I do not want to be doing that, though, but it starts at the right time'…I do not want a course that finishes at 4:00 pm when my kids finish school at 3:15 pm*." A long-term sickness in the family that requires constant care may also negatively affect adults (Pennacchia et al., 2018, p.24).

Although there are some differences between nations, it is thought that women are more affected by family constraint barriers than men (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Chisolm et al., 2004; Boeren, 2011; Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010; Chuang, 2015). That situation may be due to the traditional roles and gender roles women have to undertake (Boeren, 2011). Women have to take care of their children after birth and try to have a balance between their family-related responsibilities and their jobs. This situation pushes the participation of women in professional development studies to the second plan. (Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010; Chuang, 2015)

Women should receive childcare support to minimize the impact of this disadvantage compared to men. However, given the current situation, there is a lack of adequate, appropriate, and affordable childcare services and financial support to pay for such services (McGivney, 1999; Cumming, 1992; Gaikezheyongai, 2000; OECD, 2002). However, in some countries, one can see good examples of these kinds of help to women, like in welfare Nordic countries. The public-supported early childhood education and care system in the Nordic countries seems to positively affect women's participation (OECD, 2002), which helps women create time for themselves to participate in lifelong learning. It is more evident with women having very young children. The effects of good policies like child allowances, support for lone parents, parental leave schemes, and flexible working hours cannot be underestimated (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

3.6 Socio-Economic Group

In the literature, a widely accepted theory can be described as the lower the social group or class, the lower the participation rate (Brookfield, 1986; Munn & McDonald, 1988; Thomas, 2001; McGivney, 1993, 1996). In their article, Norman and Hyland (2003) stated that "The other factor is described as a socio-economic group that the individual is in. People with the lower socio-economic level would have lower participation level in post-school learning" (Norman & Hyland, 2003).

However, the socio-economic background of an adult should not be regarded as a direct barrier. Individuals from low-income groups have lower levels of post-secondary aspirations than individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Raymer,2022). Socio-economic background may influence how and to what extent an adult feels about institutional and situational barriers, which are previously explained (Bohle and Greskovits, 2007a).

Adult learners may encounter situational barriers at home, as they may be disadvantaged demographically by poverty or economic difficulties (Spivey, 2016). Overcoming specific barriers is easier in societies with higher socio-economic levels. Even in the same society, adults with lower income report more different types of barriers. It is assumed that in the context of the neoliberal welfare regime in Estonia, structural barriers (institutional and situational) are mainly to be overcome by the adults themselves, and this, in turn, affects the perception of dispositional barriers to further learning. (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011).

Rubenson and Desjardins explain overcoming the barriers as "The empirical findings suggest that the major difference between Nordic and non-Nordic countries are not the existence of barriers to participation but the conditions that allow a person to overcome these" (Rubenson & Desjardins,

2009). Gorard and Smith argued that adults' social expectations are shaped according to the place they are born and raised, affecting the access level of learning opportunities. This means participation in lifelong learning would be low in economically disadvantaged areas (Gorard & Smith, 2007).

The welfare of the society that adults live in significantly affects the participation level. "It is therefore of interest to reflect on aspects of the Nordic welfare state that profoundly affect barriers and thus participation." Nordic welfare countries have a total employment concept. They integrate adult education with an active labor market. They developed a corporatist structure that involves negotiations among the state, employers, and unions. There is a publicly supported sector of adult popular education in those countries. In the article, it is argued that "Through this structural condition, individuals in the Nordic countries have access to a form of adult education that can respond to different aspirations and needs than the formal educational system or the education and training that is supplied by employers" (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

3.7 Lack of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is "the belief that you can do things well and that other people respect you" in the Cambridge Dictionary. Although there are too many definitions for self-confidence in the literature, one' assuredness in oneself and one's capabilities' seems to be general enough to help understand self-confidence (Erwin & Kelly, 1985, p. 395). Self-confidence can be regarded as a dispositional barrier: a learner's feelings and attitudes towards learning (Cross, 1981).

In the literature, there are related concepts with self-confidence, such as self-seen-as-learner (McClusky, 1970) or self-as-learner (Gorard & Selwyn, 2005). In their article, Gorard and Selwyn (2005) argued that a positive identity of self-as-learner helps adults raise their participation rate. If adults have a negative self-image as a learner, learning would lose its charm and be regarded as a concern (Gorard & Selwyn, 2005). If learners have low self-esteem or a general lack of self-confidence, they would be non-participants (Kennedy, 1997).

Raymers (2022) found that 6 out of 10 participants mentioned self-doubt as a barrier to attending lifelong learning activities. One of the participants stated that;

> "Oh, some days I have much self-doubt. Can I do this? Because of the schedule and time, I need to be involved in some of my classes. I will sit down and look at the syllabus, and I sometimes shake my head like there is no possible way that I am going to be able to do this. However, I try and pick each class back-to-back. Like, I got eight pieces of homework in this class and six pieces of work in this class, and I got seven pieces in this class. Let us see, and we only have five in this one, four in this one, five in this one. Last week we did seven, so we will only get three done this week. Do you know? I must juggle it like that, depending on the homework load. Not that I do not want to get it all done. Time constraints, and then my self-doubt about much of it, too" (Raymers, 2022, s.76).

Pennacchia et al. (2018) revealed that a lack of self-confidence may arouse bad experiences in early education years. For example, one of the participants stated that he was bullied in secondary school. A long break from learning can be another factor affecting an adult's self-confidence. A participant stated, "*I feel very under-confident in anything to do with numbers now.*"

The question is, "What happens if learners trust themselves?" Obviously, if learners trust themselves in learning, it would not be hard to adjust to new situations and take responsibility. In this way, they will be motivated easily and enjoy the learning process (Norman & Hyland, 2003; Hillage & Aston, 2001). Otherwise, they will fear being unsuccessful in learning, and this will decrease their participation level in adult learning activities (Merriam & Caffarella 1999, p. 56–57).

It is obvious that if learners lack self-confidence, the learning process will be affected negatively. Norman and Hyland (2003) conducted a qualitative research. They studied with prospective teachers

about self-confidence. They found out that "In the opposite case, that is, in cases where self-confidence rates are low, they stated that they experienced: Self-critical and doubtful of their abilities; anxious, nervous, tense, uncomfortable and insecure; have difficulty communicating with and interacting with others; avoid certain tasks" (Norman & Hyland, 2003). The situation is worse with the older adults. Adults in their forties or fifties state dispositional barriers, which means they do not trust themselves or have negative attitudes toward learning. Therefore, it is suggested that learning environments need to be designed in such a way that it would help adults overcome their learning fears (Roosmaa & Saar, 2011; Rubenson, 2007).

When learners trust themselves, however, the learning process is affected positively. "*Increasing confidence, on the other hand, had facilitative effects. Growing confidence allowed them to adapt to new situations quicker, take on more responsibility, engage more fully in the learning process, enjoy learning, be more relaxed, be more motivated*" (Norman & Hyland, 2003).

4. Results and Recommendations

It is seen that cost, time, motivation, and family constraints are the most frequent ones. However, certain groups have higher participation rates. Participants typically possess a higher level of education, have higher expectations about their jobs, and are relatively younger.

According to the UNESCO (2022) report, while there have been positive developments in women's participation, the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous students, rural populations, migrants, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, or prisoners, are still deprived of learning opportunities and are in need of adult education the most. Participation among women and youth has increased significantly. However, the situation for elderly adults is mixed; while 23% of countries report an increase, 24% have reported a decrease.

"Education at a Glance" document prepared by the OECD (2022) includes key indicators related to education. In the report, there were 5,000 participants from member countries. The aim was to assess education systems, understand differences between countries, and provide data for policy decisions. Across OECD countries, the rate of adults participating in formal or non-formal learning activities is generally low, often below 40%. This rate varies significantly between countries; it is above 60% in countries like New Zealand and Sweden, while below 15% in countries like Greece and Hungary.

Among adults aged 25-34, 50% participate in formal or non-formal learning activities, whereas this rate drops to 27% for adults aged 55-64. The participation rate for adults in the 55-64 age group with a low level of education is 14%, while it is over 65% for young adults with a high level of education. In OECD countries, only 6% of adults aged 30-39 are involved in formal education. While some countries (such as Australia, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, and Sweden) have higher rates, registering in this age group and beyond is quite rare.

In 2007, on average, 34% of adults in OECD countries participated in non-formal education activities. Participation rates vary significantly between countries, with over 50% in countries like Finland, Norway, and Sweden, but below 15% in countries like Greece, Hungary, and Turkey. Overall, 25% of working-age adults in the OECD have recently participated in job-related learning activities. This participation rate varies between countries, with some Nordic countries like Finland, Norway, and Sweden exceeding 40%, while it is below 15% in countries like Greece, Hungary, and Turkey. Investment in employees with a high level of education is generally higher than investment in those with a low level of education.

In the 2021 Adult Participation in Learning Survey, Hall et al. (2021) categorized obstacles encountered by learners into three main groups: situational barriers, stemming from an adult's personal and family circumstances, encompassing factors such as financial constraints, work pressures, and other commitments; dispositional barriers, related to the attitudes, perceptions, and expectations of adults, including concerns about age, health issues, and a lack of digital skills or

confidence for online learning; and institutional barriers, representing challenges or issues associated with the learning process or the tutor.

Eldred et al. (2017) conducted a survey of adult learning participation, with a sample of 5,169 adults aged 17 and above in the United Kingdom. According to the research findings women have a significantly higher participation rate compared to men. Individuals from higher social classes are more inclined to participate in learning compared to those from lower social classes. Employment status is a significant determinant of participation. Those closer to the labor market are associated with higher participation rates. The likelihood of participating in learning is equal between full-time and part-time workers. Age strongly influences the participation rate. Each age group has a significantly higher participation rate than the next older group. The only exception is the 25 to 34 age group, which has slightly lower rates than the 35 to 44 age group. Participants from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are significantly more inclined to participate in learning compared to White participants. Completing full-time education at a young age is strongly associated with learning participation; those who complete education at 16 or below have the lowest likelihood of participation. On the other hand, those continuing education until at least 21 years old have the highest participation rates.

Overcoming these barriers is crucial for increasing participation. Specific strategies, such as providing information by educational institutions or the government and adapting learning opportunities to meet potential learners' needs, are essential (Boeren et al., 2010).

This research is a review of previous publications. There is a need for further studies on the lifelong learning barriers regarding quality and application. Further awareness about the lifelong learning approach should be created through activities such as seminars, conferences, panels, etc., which will be organized in light of this information. Furthermore, through collaboration between universities and the Ministry of Education, new lifelong learning programs should be constituted, and they should contribute to the development of society as a whole. To encourage non-participants, educational institutions and government institutions can provide incentives, as suggested by Smith and Spurling (2001).

Ethics Declaration

According to the Publication Ethics guidelines developed by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), this research has been conducted, and the authors declare that there have been no ethical violations.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no academic or financial conflicts of interest.

Informed Consent

Since no human participants were involved in this study, voluntary consent was not required.

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