Are Older Adults Learning?

Examining the profile of older learners and the relationship between learning and psychosocial outcomes

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Presentation Outline

- Background
- Objectives
- Findings
- Discussion

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Background

- Lifelong learning
- Benefits of learning
- Learning initiatives for older adults in Singapore

DukeNUS Medical School

Lifelong learning

- Dimensions of formal, informal & non-formal learning (Power & Maclean, 2011)
  - Formal learning: Formal education, in-company training
  - Informal learning: Vocational skills acquired at workplace
  - Non-formal learning: Learning resulting from daily life activities
- A process of continuous learning, taking place at all times in an individual's lifetime (Laal, 2011)
- Greater importance of learning in older age should be emphasised

Benefits of learning in older adults

Potential benefits associated with older adult learning:

- Increased life satisfaction (Bynner & Hammond, 2004; Yamashita et al, 2017)
- Higher levels of wellbeing (Jenkins & Mostafa, 2015; Narushima, Liu & Diestelkamp, 2013)
- Expanded social networks (Schuller et al, 2004)
- Increased civic and social engagement (Schuller et al, 2004)

Learning initiatives for older adults in Singapore

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Job-related courses

- Courses taken to enhance employability through skills mastery & applications in changing labour markets
- Examples: Post-education training (PET), continued education training (CET)

SKILLSFuture SG

WS SINGAPORE WORKFORCE SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS

Non job-related courses

- Courses taken to pursue personal, social or recreational learning, catering to interests/hobbies

NATIONAL Silver ACADEMY

learning continues @ 50+

DukeNUS Medical School

Objectives

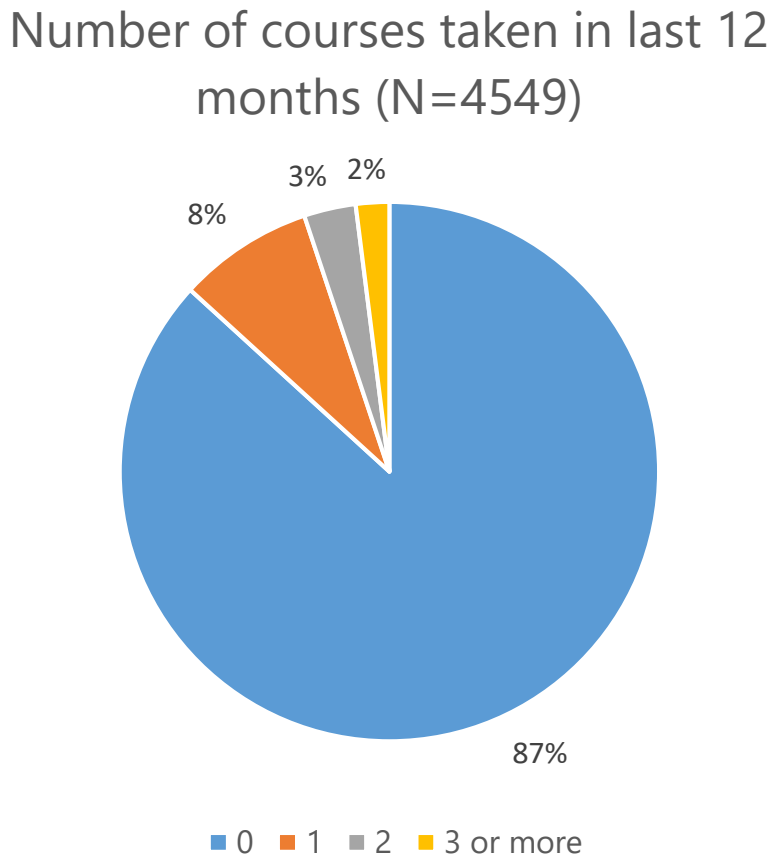
Objectives

- To identify sociodemographic and health correlates of engagement in learning
  - Who is learning?
- To identify sociodemographic and health correlates of engagement in job-related learning
  - Who is learning what?
- To explore the relationship of learning with psychosocial outcomes

Findings

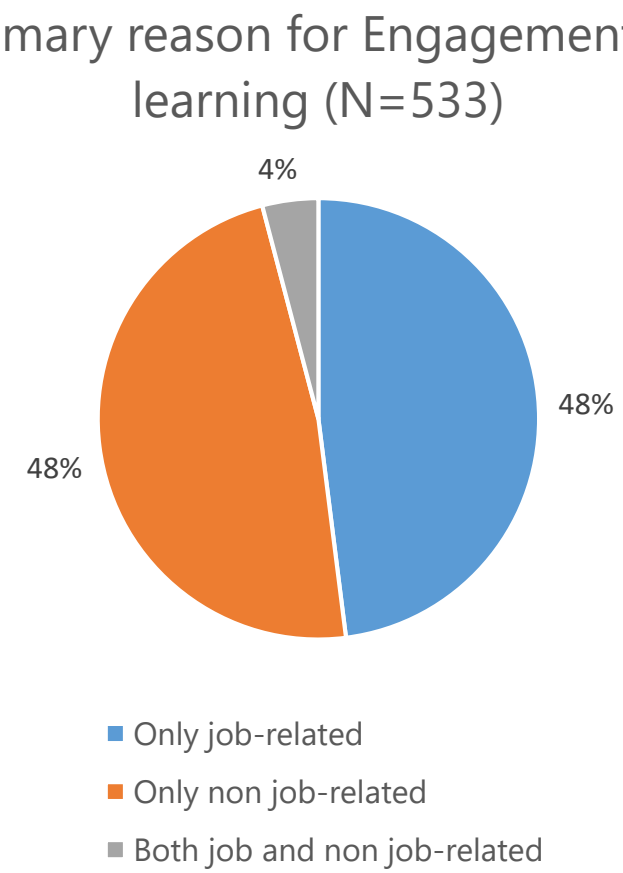
- Descriptive statistics
- Correlates of engagement in learning
- Correlates of engagement in job-related learning
- Relationship of learning with psychosocial outcomes

Are you currently attending or did you attend any courses or any other education and training in the last 12 months?



- Majority of participants (87%) reported not taking courses in the last 12 months ("Not engaged in learning")
- A smaller proportion of participants (13%) reported taking at least 1 course in the last 12 months ("Engaged in learning")

What was the main reason for participating in this course/education/training?



- Out of those who were engaged in learning:
  - 48% were engaged in learning for job-related reasons ("Engaged in job-related learning")
    - Took courses to find a job, advance career prospects etc.)
  - 48% were engaged in learning for non job-related reasons ("Engaged in non job-related learning")
    - Took courses for leisure or interest
  - 4% were engaged in learning for both reasons

WHO IS LEARNING: Correlates of engagement in learning

- Multivariate logistic regression
- Dependent variable:
  - Engagement in learning (i.e. took ≥1 course vs did not take courses in last 12 months)
- Independent variables:
  - Sociodemographic factors (e.g. gender, age, ethnic group etc.)
  - Health factors (e.g. state of health, ADL/IADL limitations, etc.)

Correlates of engagement in learning (N=4485)

Demographic, social and health variables	Odds ratio
Gender (ref: Male)	
Female	1.30*
Ethnic group (ref: Chinese)	
Malay	1.36*
Indian	1.17
Others	0.80
Education level (ref: No formal education)	
Primary	1.58*
Secondary	2.62***
Tertiary	4.53***

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

- Females are more likely to engage in learning as compared to males
- Malays are more likely to engage in learning as compared to Chinese
- Participants with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in learning as compared to those with no formal education

Correlates of engagement in learning (N=4485)

Demographic, social and health variables	Odds ratio
Age (ref: 60-69)	
70-79	0.90
80 and above	0.25***
Employment status (ref: Working full-time)	
Working part-time	0.79
Retired and/or not working	0.33***
Never worked	0.09***
State of health (ref: Excellent/Very Good)	
Good	0.85
Fair	0.95
Poor	0.45*
IADL limitations (ref: 0)	
At least 1 IADL difficulty	0.67*
Vision (ref: Excellent/Very Good/Good)	
Fair/Poor	0.70**

- Participants aged 80 and above are less likely to engage in learning as compared to those aged 60-69
- Participants who retired, not working or never worked are less likely to engage in learning as compared to those working full-time
- Participants in a poor state of health, has ≥1 IADL limitation or reported fair/poor vision are less likely to engage in learning as compared to those with excellent/very good state of health, 0 IADL limitation or excellent/very good/good vision

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

WHO IS LEARNING WHAT: Correlates of engagement in job-related learning

- Multivariate logistic regression
- Dependent variable:
  - Engagement in job-related learning (i.e. took courses for job-related vs non job-related reasons)
- Independent variables:
  - Sociodemographic factors (e.g. gender, age, ethnic group etc.)
  - Health factors (e.g. state of health, ADL/IADL limitations, etc.)

Correlates of engagement in job-related learning (N=510)

Demographic, social and health factors	Odds ratio
Gender (ref: Male)	
Female	0.31***
Ethnic group (ref: Chinese)	
Malay	3.12**
Indian	2.76*
Others	1.86
Employment status (ref: Working full-time)	
Working part-time	0.42**
Retired and/or not working	0.037***

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

- Malays or Indians are ~3 times more likely to engage in job-related learning as compared to Chinese
- Females are less likely to engage in job-related learning as compared to males
- Participants working part-time or retired/not working are less likely to engage in job-related learning as compared to those working full-time

Relationship of learning with psychosocial outcomes

- Multivariate linear, logistic or ordered logistic regression
- Independent variable
  - Engagement in learning (i.e. took ≥1 course vs did not take courses in last 12 months)
- Dependent variables

Psychosocial outcome	Scale
Social networks	Lubben's social network scale
Depressive symptoms	CES-D scale
Loneliness	UCLA loneliness scale
Quality of life	Control, Autonomy, Self-Realization and Pleasure scale

Relationship of learning with psychosocial outcomes

- Engagement in learning was associated with stronger social networks only

	Social networks	**Depressive symptoms**	**Loneliness**	**Quality of life**
N	4033	2023	2011	4032
Engagement in learning	1.37***	0.78	1.02	0.42

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
# Controlled for potential confounders, such as demographic and health factors

Discussion

- Summary of findings
- Comparison with the NSA study
- Why are older Singaporeans not learning?

Summary of findings

- Only 13% are learning
- Those engaged in learning are
  - More likely: female, Malay, have higher levels of education
  - Less likely : aged 80 and above, not working or never worked, in poor health

- Those engaged in job-related learning are
  - More likely: ethnic minorities
  - Less likely: female, working full-time

- Engagement in learning was associated with stronger social networks, after controlling for potential confounders

Comparison with NSA study

- Study aims
  - Impact of learning in NSA courses on health and psychosocial wellbeing
  - Understanding of the learning preferences of older adults
- Mixed methods study
  - Questionnaire surveys over 3 time points (i.e. longitudinal)
  - In-depth qualitative interviews
- 558 study participants
  - Older Singaporeans aged 50 and above
  - Enrolled in NSA short courses

Comparison with NSA study (1)

Domain	THE SIGNS Study-I	NSA Study	Conclusion
Age	Young old are more likely to learn	Majority of NSA study participants are young old	Young old are more likely to be educated and in better health
Gender	Females are more likely to engage in non job-related learning	Females prefer taking courses that would improve their social and emotional competencies instead of skills-based ones	A gendered preference behind primary reason for learning exists
Ethnic group	Ethnic minorities are more likely to engage in learning for job-related reasons	Majority of NSA study participants are Chinese and engaged in learning for non job-related reasons (i.e. NSA courses)	Ethnic minorities appear to upgrade their skills to remain employable

Comparison with NSA study (2)

Domain	THE SIGNS Study-I	NSA Study	Conclusion
Education	Those with higher levels of education are more likely to learn	Majority of NSA study participants completed at least secondary school education	Educational advantages impact learning activities in later life
Health	Those with poor health are less likely to learn	Majority of NSA study participants are in better health as compared to THE SIGNS Study-I participants	Poor health affects motivations to learn
Social capital	Learning is associated with stronger social networks	Significant gains in informational support & civic engagement behaviours seen over time	Positive association of learning and older learners' social capital (eg. social networks & contributions to the community)

Why are older Singaporeans not learning?

Non job-related courses not readily available until after NSA is introduced, thereby excluding older Singaporeans who are not working

Learning programmes and their marketing/promotion strategies are **not targeted and inclusive**

Thank you for your attention!

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