

Adult Participation in Evening Secondary Schools: The Findings of Empirical Research in the Greek Islands

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Abstract

The study of adult participation in education and the examination of the factors that influence their final decision is one of the most critical issues in the field. This article summarises the findings of empirical research on adult engagement in evening schools in Greece, with an emphasis on evening schools in the Greek islands. Evening schools started in Greece around 60 years ago. These schools, now part of the secondary education system, are primarily aimed towards those who work during the day (mostly adults). Their goal is to provide the opportunity for adults who, for some reason, interrupted their studies in Gymnasium (lower secondary/middle school) or Lyceum (upper secondary/high school) to complete it. There has never been a study on residents of Greek islands who participate in educational programmes of this nature. The presented research investigates factors that impact adult participation in all evening schools administratively situated in Greek islands. Between February and May 2022, 268 adult students participated in the study by completing a survey questionnaire that was quantitatively evaluated using SPSSs. The sample comes from all the islands where evening Lyceums operate. To determine the elements that influence participation, the data was submitted to component analysis using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) approach. Four of the discovered factors are deemed critical (self-assessment, attitudes towards education, educational perspective and expectations), while others seem somewhat relevant and have a role.

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Key words

adult participation, evening schools, Greek islands, quantitative research, principal component analysis

Introduction

Internationally, the effort by Houle (1961) to document the motives that an adult person has to pick an educational programme may be regarded as the foundation for organising research in this topic. He developed a typology that connected to the orientation of adult participants in learning and comprised three sorts of participants: goal-oriented, learning-focused and educational activity-oriented (McGivney, 1993; Zarifis, 2011).

Since that time, significant progress has been made in understanding adult engagement in educational activities. Theories and interpretative models that provide crucial information and explain various factors have been established. The 'Chain of Response' model, proposed by Patricia Cross (1981), and combining aspects from prior models is perhaps the most complete attempt.

Participation is influenced by elements that are "both endogenous and external, and typically involve the manifestation of a certain behaviour (motive), which in this instance is closely related to the fulfilment of the desire for learning (objective)" (Papadimitriou, 2019, p. 51).

In Greece, Evening General Lyceums (EGLs) were established 60 years ago as part of general secondary education. These institutions allow adults to complete secondary education that has been interrupted for various reasons. Evening education is Greece's oldest adult education institution. For many years, the motivations for attending EGLs were unknown. Documenting the motives and needs of those who wish to attend these schools could enable them to improve and attract more students. Papadimitriou(2019) first attempted to analyse the determinants influencing adult engagement in these schools during the 2014-15 academic year, focusing on all EGLs in Greece.

This essay aims to discuss the elements that influence adult participation in evening secondary schools in the islands of Greece. The results of a poll conducted in the 2021-22 school year and included adults from all of Greece's islands where EGLs operate. This was the first survey of adult-specific variables in the islands of Greece. The theoretical synthetic technique of Cross's 'Chain of Response' was applied for its organisation. The data was collected using a questionnaire,

and it was analysed using SPSS. The data was subjected to factor analysis using the principal component analysis approach, and the factors influencing the decision to participate were identified. Four critical aspects were captured in the survey: educational perspective, self-assessment, attitude towards education and expectations. Other factors that appeared to have impacted the adults' decision to participate and played a role were additionally recorded.

The educational structure and characteristics of the participants define the variety of elements influencing adult engagement in evening schools. We must also consider the socio-economic realities of the Greek islands, as well as other issues (such as length, degree of isolation, geographical location, special cultural characteristics, etc.). All of this makes it challenging to investigate (for the first time) why people in Greek islands return to school.

Review of theory on adult participation in education

Adult education participation is a phenomenon that is impacted by several interconnected and interacting elements. Their discovery requires careful preparation and extensive investigation as they vary depending on the qualities of the participants and the educational system. Houle's typology (1961) had a massive influence on the study and inspired other scientists to delve further into this subject. During a brief survey of participation ideas, numerous techniques that appear to have been influenced by the context at the time they were developed are identified. Miller (1967) sought to study and understand the factors impacting involvement in his 'Force-Field Analysis'. According to Miller, participation is a relationship between human needs and social institutions. When an individual's needs and social structures both drive them towards an educational objective, the chance of involvement skyrockets. In the 'Congruence Model', Boshier (1973) investigates perseverance and dropout in an educational programme. He argues that the reasons for engagement are tied to the individual's self-perception and the educational environment. According to Boshier, deficiency motivation may lead to dropout, whereas growth motivation can lead to perseverance. Rubenson (1977) believes that the combination of expectancy (the individual expects something from education) and valence (the power of education) can lead to a driving force that can be converted into participation in an educational activity in the 'expectancy-valence paradigm', which begins with an interaction between the individual and their environment. If the valence or expectation is lost, so is the power of involvement.

Tough (1979) relates engagement to the anticipated rewards of the individual. He outlines five phases in his model, each of which is tied to the rewards

individuals anticipate from their engagement. According to Aslanian and Brickell (1980), the 'Living of Transitions Theory', individuals' choice to participate corresponds with numerous changes (transitions) in their life circumstances (marriage, divorce, the birth of children, etc.). Darkenwald and Merriam's (1982, as referenced in McGivney, 1993) 'Psycho-social interaction model' focuses on the social environment and the individual's socio-economic condition, and various elements impacting involvement are noted. It is akin to 'recruitment paradigm'. The 'variable grouping' was based on the 'expectancy-valence paradigm'. In this example, three groupings of variables interact with one another and have varying degrees of relevance. According to Cross's (1981) 'Chain-of-Response model', participation is the consequence of a chain of responses in which forces are tied to the person (internal) and external factors. The chain of response consists of seven stages, as she characterises them: a) self-evaluation; b) attitudes towards education; c) goal importance and anticipation that involvement would fulfil objectives; d) life transitions; e) opportunities and impediments; f) accurate information; g) participation (the final decision). The more beneficial an adult's learning experience is at each stage, the more likely it is that the chain will be completed.

These concepts helped organise the research and provide documentation of the factors affecting adults' interest in education. According to some research findings, adults' positive self-evaluation, as well as their need to build their self-confidence, improve their image and self-esteem – and, most importantly, their need to understand what they did not understand before so as to be able to express themselves more eloquently and evaluate that their knowledge and skills are factors that can influence participation (Papadimitriou, 2019). Adults' attitudes about schooling are equally crucial (Blunt & Yang, 2002; Bariso, 2008; Papadimitriou 2019); however, the lack of obstacles paired with the availability of educational offers is critical. Equally crucial is the relevant information that individuals receive about particular educational opportunities they are interested in (Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019).

Some inquiries have also been conducted in Greece. Zarifis (2010) documented the variables of involvement in Greece's adult education centres in his study. In his survey, "personal reasons" accounted for the largest share, followed by "professional reasons" (in terms of overall reasons for participation). Karalis (2013) explored the motives, impediments and degree of engagement of adults in non-formal educational activities. Characteristics connected to professional upgrading and enthusiasm in learning stood out in his study.

In his research, motivations for participation that belong to the “professional upgrading” and “interest in learning” groups were distinguished. Papadimitriou (2019) documented the participation variables in his investigation of the Greek territory’s evening *Lyceums*. This research was the first to be carried out in Greece to record participation factors. In this research, the factors educational perspective, attitudes towards education and self-assessment were distinguished. Goulas et al. (2022) presented data from the research of ‘Metron Analysis’ (market research and polling company) in their report titled ‘Adults and lifelong learning programmes in the period of the pandemic: the challenge of digital skills’ and mentioned the reasons that influenced (positively or negatively) the decision to participate in lifelong learning programmes in Greece during the pandemic period. The most important reason was that they had “more free time”, while the thought that “they will gain knowledge” positively influenced their decision. Several people answered that the remote programmes were “a great relief” and that during the pandemic, they were “in a great mood for creative employment”.

Research shows that a person’s demographic characteristics, when interacting with other factors, can influence their decision to participate. In their research, Sundet & Galbraith (1991) found that demographic variables influenced the ranking of factors that acted as deterrents (barriers) to the participation of adults in educational programmes. In his research, Papadimitriou (2019) found that the participants’ profile affected the intensity of the factors that influenced the decision of adults to attend the evening *Lyceums* of the territory. More men participated in his research. Most adults (regardless of gender) were young (18 to 24 years old), unemployed and with a low income, single, without children and born and raised in Greece (with Greek as their mother tongue). The analyses identified variations in the intensity of determinants in the associations made with various demographic variables. Specifically, in the correlations made in the ‘self-assessment’ factor with the demographic characteristics, statistically significant differences were found with gender (the intensity of the ‘self-assessment’ factor is recorded higher in women than in men), age (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher for people aged 41 to 50 years than for people aged 18 to 24), occupational status (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in pensioners than in the self-employed), annual personal income (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in people with an annual individual income of ‘5,001 to 10,000 euros’ compared to people who had ‘0 to 5,000 euros’), marital status (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in the divorced than in those who were in cohabitation), whether or not they had children (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in those

who had children compared to those who did not) and their mother tongue (the intensity of the factor was recorded higher in those whose mother tongue was Greek, in relation to those whose mother tongue was another non-European tongue). In the correlations made in the “attitude towards education” factor with the demographic characteristics, statistically significant differences were found with gender (the intensity of the “attitude towards education” factor is recorded higher in women than in men), age (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in people aged ‘over 50 years’ than in people aged ‘18 to 24 years’), annual individual income (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in people with an annual individual income of ‘over 15,000 euros’ in relation to people who had ‘0 to 5,000 euros’), marital status (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in widows and widowers compared to those who were cohabiting), whether or not they had children (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in those who had children compared to those who did not), whether they lived in Greece all their life or as immigrants (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in people who lived in Greece all their life in relation to people who had lived as immigrants in the last 10 years before conducting the research) and their mother tongue (the intensity of the factor is recorded higher in those whose mother tongue is Greek compared to those whose mother tongue is another non-European language). In the correlations made in the factor ‘educational perspective’ with demographic characteristics, statistically significant differences were found with gender (the intensity of the factor ‘educational perspective’ is recorded higher in women than in men) and individual annual income (the intensity of factor is recorded higher in people with an annual individual income of ‘0 to 5,000 euros’ compared to people who had ‘10,001 to 15,000 euros’).

Apparently, many different factors are involved and interact in the decision of adults to participate (such as demographic, psychological, general characteristics and external conditions – but also factors related to the type and way of providing the educational programme, etc.). In any case, however, it is not always easy to predict but also interpret participation because it is a dynamic process which is an individual case of each person and in which we have variables that are constantly transforming and interacting (Norland, 1992). What can give us reliable and interpretable data on participation is field research.

It is important that those who provide educational programmes take into account adults’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to attract more people to education. The development of educational policy for adults involves challenges, mainly related to the mobilisation of people who do not participate. It is equally

important that adults understand the necessity of education and approach it positively (Beder, 1990).

Evening secondary education in Greece

Evening schools first appeared in Greece in February 1866, when the ‘Society of Friends of the People’ (SFP) offered free lessons to workers (Dormparakis, 1990, as cited in Rizou, 2004, p. 46). The ‘Student Educational Association’ established the first private evening secondary school in Greece – specifically, in Athens in 1936 (Mandatory Law 250/1936, Article 6). It was open to all classes and targeted young people who worked during the day. The first public evening secondary schools (evening *Gymnasiums*) were established in 1949 (with certain exceptions) as branches of day schools (Papachristos, 1958, as cited in Rizou, 2004, p. 154) and offered a six-year curriculum. In 1964, general evening secondary schools were founded in Greece. They are part of general education, specifically secondary education, according to Greek Legislative Decree 4379/1964 (Article 1, Paragraph 1). They were attended for four years (Article 1, Paragraph 3). The books and curriculum in evening secondary schools are similar to day schools (only minor students attend day schools).

Research methodology

Purpose and research questions

The islands of Greece are divided into four administrative areas (South Aegean, North Aegean, Crete and Ionian Islands). Adult students from the Greek islands, from the four administrative areas where evening *Lyceums* operate, participated in the present research. When this study was carried out, the EGL attendance lasted three years (Law 4547/2018), and the right to study was open to adult male and female students (without the condition of being employed – i.e., the unemployed can also participate), but also to working underage male and female students (Article 105, Paragraphs 1 & 2). Under some circumstances, EGL graduates are qualified to sit for national tests for entrance to higher education (Article 105, Paragraph 2).

According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), there were 17 public EGLs functioning in the islands of Greece for the school year 2019-20 (the last year for which statistics are available), with 921 people (adults and minors) studying in them. There were 859 adults and 62 minors among them. There were 488 males and 371 women among the 859 adult students (source: ELSTAT, 2023).

The study's goal was to record, evaluate and interpret the involvement variables of individuals from the islands of Greece in EGLs. The following questions were posed:

1. How do adult students rate themselves in connection to their involvement in EGLs?
2. What is their attitude towards education, and how does it affect their participation?
3. What are their expectations, and what do they want to achieve by participating?
4. How is their involvement encouraged or discouraged?
5. Were there any life changes that affected their choice to participate?
6. How much do they believe involvement will help them transform their lives and daily routines?
7. To what degree did the information they got regarding the EGLs suffice and influence their choice to participate?

The questions above are the focus of the study and were developed in response to the primary objective and methodology (Papadimitriou, 2019).

Sample and demographic characteristics

The study was conducted in Greece during the spring of the school year 2021-2022 (between February and May 2022). During the study period, the reference population consisted of male and female adult students actively engaged in the EGLs of the Greek islands. The sample consisted of 268 male and female adult students from the three school year levels of public (state-supported) EGLs in the (administrative) areas of the Ionian Islands (west of the nation), Crete, South and North Aegean. A total of 415 questionnaires were sent, and the return rate was 64.58% (satisfactory return rate, see Kelpanidis, 1999, p. 81). The Ministry of Education received a special permit to conduct the research (Decision 25148/16-2-2022), and all participants and school principals were informed in writing of the purpose of the research previous to its application and consented to participate. The sample included 268 adult students, with 53% being males and 47% women. The majority of them (35,1%) were between the ages of 18 and 24. The majority of them were unemployed (33.3%), had an income ranging from '0 to 5000 euros' (55.2%), were single (48.5%), had no children (58.6%), had lived in Greece their whole lives (93.3%) and spoke Greek (94.8%). The majority of participants (37,8%) were in their third year of EGL.

Data collection and reliability issues

A self-completion questionnaire was selected for data collection because it matched the demands of this particular quantitative research (Kelpanidis, 1999, p. 81).

The study was conducted using stratified random sampling (Stamovlasis, 2016, p. 196) based on the location where the adult students resided. The sample is representative, and the findings have the potential to be generalised. The internal consistency of the data-collecting instrument was examined for reliability (Litwin, 1995). Cronbach's coefficient 'a' (which was very high) was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items in the scales generated. Papadimitriou (2019) constructed the questionnaire and contained only closed-ended questions. The seven categories of Patricia Cross's (1981) 'Chain of Response' model, as well as the linkages that developed from her updated model, were utilised in its creation (see Papadimitriou, 2019). Table 1 shows the thematic axes of the questionnaire used in the research.

Table 1: Thematic axes of the questionnaire

First part	
Questions: 1-9	The profile of the participants
Second part	
Questions: 10-16	How do they evaluate themselves?
Questions: 17-22	What is their attitude towards education?
Questions: 23-29	What are their goals?
Questions: 30-39	What are their expectations?
Questions: 40-47	Changes in their life circumstances that influenced their decision
Questions: 48-52	Changes they expect in their lives after participation
Questions: 53-61	What encouraged their decision?
Questions: 62-72	What discouraged them?
Questions: 72-80	What was the information they had and where did it come from?

The questionnaires were printed and sent by post. The proportion of completed questionnaires returned was relatively high (64.58%) and comparable to the average of social science projects that employ this strategy for data collecting (Kelpanidis, 1999, p. 81).

For this study, all norms of conduct were followed. People who participated were specifically those who wanted to and agreed to the study being undertaken. The questionnaire was anonymous, and the data was exclusively utilised for the specified study (De Vaus, 2014) and for which suitable permission was obtained.

Method of analysis

The study data was statistically processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS for Windows). Central tendency indicators (median, mean and predominant value) were employed to better define the data distributions. The median was chosen for asymmetrical distributions because it is unaffected by extreme values (50% of measurements are less than it, and the remaining 50% are bigger). Factor analysis was used to minimise the number of variables in the questionnaires (data reduction) and better handle the data. The Principal Component Analysis technique was used. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to determine if the data was suitable for factor analysis. The eigenvalue diagram (scree plot) was used to determine the ultimate number of components in each connection. The internal consistency index (Cronbach's Alpha) was used to test the reliability of the items (of the questionnaire) that were grouped and from which the components were derived (see Papadimitriou, 2019).

Analysis of empirical data

Factor Analysis

A vast number of variables (questions) were classified into groups using factor analysis, which formed the dimensions of the questionnaire. The identification of the factors in each question group, which is primarily established by the theory and seeks validation in the empirical data, is the most significant function of factor analysis (Papadimitriou, 2019).

According to the initial design, the factors shown below emerged from grouping those questions that were connected or merged as similar.

Thematic category: How they evaluate themselves.

The component 'self-assessment' emerged from the factor analysis in the first question group of the questionnaire (Questions 10 to 16 of the questionnaire) (Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019). The questions included in this factor (see Table 3) came from the qualitative content analysis of the answers given by the participants in the interviews carried out to weigh the questionnaire (at the stage of

its construction) as well as the relevant theory (something similar happened with the other factors). The question asked here was ‘how does participation affect the way they evaluate themselves?’. The analysis resulted in seven items related to how they evaluate themselves in relation to: their readiness to participate, how they view and value themselves (self-esteem) but also their self-improvement and progress.

Table 2: Internal consistency reliability index of questions

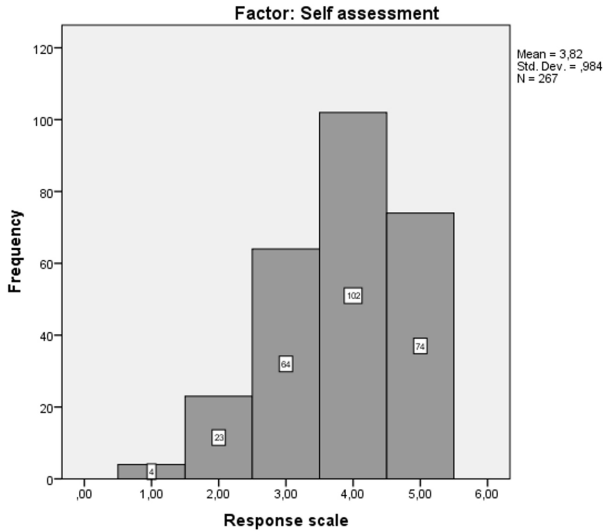
N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Questions 10 to 16	7 ,891
Questions 17 to 22	6 ,820
Questions 30 to 38	9 ,879

Table 2 shows that the reliability index (Cronbach's Alpha) is adequate (0.891) (the more it approaches the one (1), the more correlation there is between the questions) and that the internal consistency between the questions is ‘very good’. Table 3 shows the number of questions that contribute to this component. In this column, we see the rotated factor loads. The loads are the values that show us the correlation of the question with the resulting factor (the contribution of the variable to the factor extracted). The more the load approaches one (1), the more correlation there is between the question and the resulting factor.

Table 3: Factor analysis on Questions 10 to 16

Extracted Factor: Self-assessment	Component 1
Q15. I will be able to express myself better	,865
Q14. I will gain more confidence in myself and my abilities	,843
Q16 I will assess my knowledge and skills	,809
Q12. I will be given the opportunity to test my capabilities	,773
Q13. I will understand things that I did not understand before	,770
Q11. I will become a more complete citizen	,760
Q10. I am ready to meet the requirements of the curriculum	,619

In Graph 1, we see the tendency of responses (based on the scale 1 to 5 used in the questionnaire) to the factor ‘self-assessment’. According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3,82, median=4, mode=4), the respondents answered ‘applies a lot’ that they positively evaluate themselves concerning their readiness to participate.



Graph 1: Trends in responses to the 'self-assessment' factor

As can be seen from the answers, the adults who participate in the evening *Lyceum* evaluate themselves positively. Self-confidence (Dolliso & Martin, 1999) and “readiness” positively influenced their decision to participate (Boshier, 1973; Cross, 1981). Positive self-evaluation answers the first question of this research.

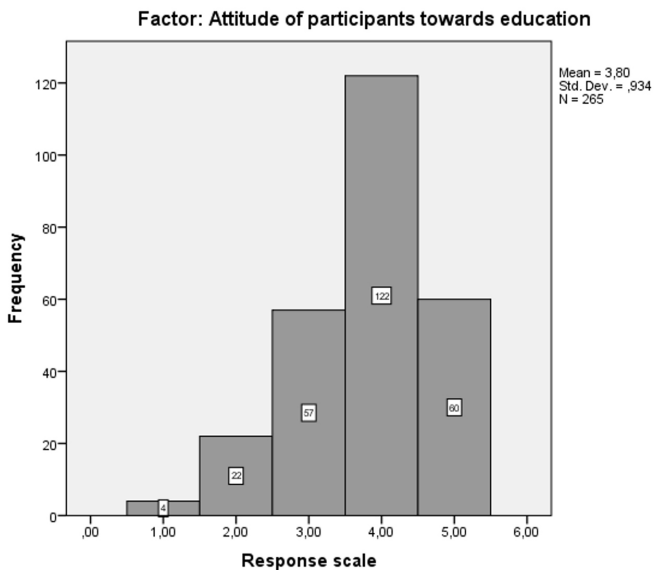
Thematic category: What are their attitudes towards education?

In the second group of questions (Questions 17 to 22), the factor ‘the attitudes of participants towards education’ emerged (Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019). There are six items that make up this factor are related to the attitude adults have towards education, but also their previous experience with it. In Table 4, we see the loads of the questions that contribute to the extracted factor. In Table 2 (see p. 8), we observe that the reliability index (Cronbach’s Alpha) is acceptable (0.820) and that there is ‘satisfactory’ internal consistency between the questions (Questions 17 to 22).

Table 4: Factor analysis on Questions 17 to 22

Extracted Factor: Attitudes of participants towards education	Component
	1
Q22. Education is a means of improving ourselves	,812
Q17. Education is a means of acquiring new knowledge	,791
Q21. I like to participate in educational activities	,752
Q18. Education is a means to help me change my attitudes and behaviours	,733
Q19. Education is a process that should last throughout our lives	,704
Q20. I have previous positive experiences from participating in other educational programmes	,600

In Graph 2, we see the tendencies of the responses. According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.8, median=4, mode=4), the respondents answered 'applies a lot' that their 'attitudes towards education' is positive.



Graph 2: The trends of responses to the factor 'attitudes of participants towards education'

The positive attitude of adult participants towards education (Blunt & Yang, 2002; McGivney, 2003; Abdullah et al., 2008; Bariso, 2008) is a very important factor and answers the second research question. Combined with the positive self-assessment, it becomes clear that these two "internal" factors were decisive in the decision to participate (Cross, 1981).

Thematic category: What are their goals?

In the third group of questions (Questions 23 to 29), two factors emerged from the factor analysis, “goals” (Rubenson, 1977; Apt, 1978; Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019) (Questions 23 to 26 and 29) and the “educational perspective” (Ball, 2002; Papadimitriou, 2019) (Questions 27 and 28).

The first factor consists of five items related to the goals they have in relation to participation. In Table 5, we see the loads of the questions. According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.07, median=3, mode=3), the respondents answered ‘quite applies’ that they participate in satisfying their “goals”.

Table 5: Factor analysis on Questions 23 to 26 and 29

Extracted Factor: Goals	Component
	1
Q24. To become more efficient at my work	,825
Q25. To increase my financial rewards	,784
Q23. To improve my image towards others	,751
Q29. To compete with others in finding a better job	,702
Q26. To make new acquaintances	,646

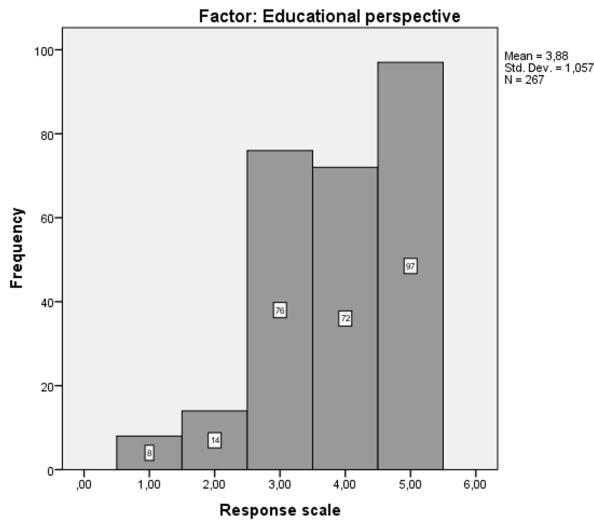
Regarding the ‘educational perspective’ factor, the items that make it up are related to their perspective on education. In Table 6, we can see the loads of the questions that contribute to the extracted factor.

Table 6: Factor analysis on Questions 27 and 28

Extracted Factor: Educational perspective	Component
	1
Q28. To continue my studies at the university or some other school	,745
Q27. To finish Lyceum, which was a wish of mine that I hadn't realised	,745

In Graph 3, we can see the tendencies of the responses. According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.88, median=4, mode=5), the respondents answered ‘applies a lot’ that they participate in the EGL because they aim for an educational perspective.

The ‘educational perspective’ factor appears to have significantly influenced (was decisive) the adults’ decision to participate and is linked to the third research question. According to the analyses, their most important goal was to complete EGL, which was a wish they had not realised, while they also aimed to continue their studies at university or some other school. The educational perspective factor is a finding since it was not present in the original model of Cross that was used.



Graph 3: Tendencies in responses to the factor 'educational perspective'

Thematic category: What are their expectations?

In the fourth group of questions (30 to 39) from the factorial analysis, two factors emerged: 'expectations' (Rubenson, 1977; Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019) (Questions 30-38) and 'improvement of family finances'(Question 39).

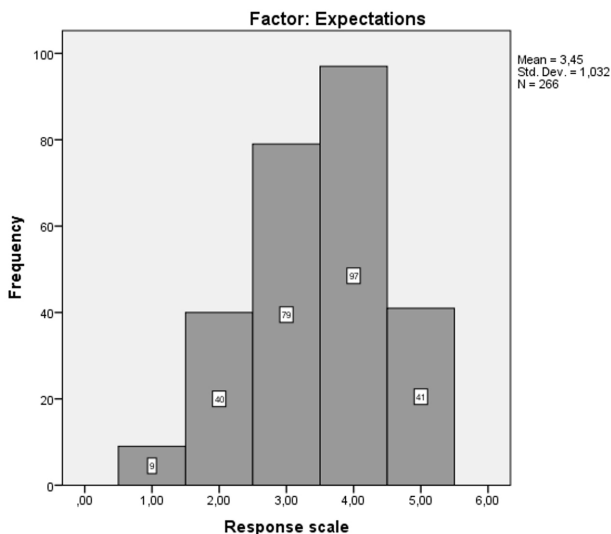
The items that make up the first factor are nine and are related to the expectations they have from their participation. In Table 7, we can see the loads of the questions (30-38) that contribute to the extracted factor. In Table 2 (see p. 8), it is observed that the reliability index is acceptable (0.879) and the internal consistency between the questions (Questions 30 to 38) is 'very satisfactory'.

Table 7: Factor analysis on Questions 30 to 38

Extracted Factor: Expectations	Component
	1
Q35. To get involved in social activities	,764
Q36. To can understand conversations	,758
Q30. To feel more powerful	,751
Q32. To gain the respect of those around me	,746
Q34. To gain useful knowledge in my daily life	,744
Q33. To set a good example to my fellow human beings who have not finished Lyceum	,726
Q37. To satisfy my curiosity about whether I can respond to the curriculum	,688
Q38. To escape from everyday life and its problems	,637
Q31. To satisfy my dream of completing secondary education	,621

In Graph 4, the tendencies of the responses to the factor 'expectations' are shown (Questions 30-38). According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.45, median=4, mode=4), the respondents answered 'it applies a lot' that they participate in the EGL because they believe that their 'expectations' will be met.

The 'expectations' factor was decisive in the adults' decision to participate and is linked to the third research question.



Graph 4: Trends in responses to the 'expectations' factor

The second factor comes from an item related to improving the family's finances (Question 39). According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=2.98, median=3, mode=5, std. deviation=1.52), the respondents answered 'quite applies' that they participate in the EGL because they expect it to improve the finances of their family.

The factor 'to improve their family's finances' is quite important and is a finding since it was not present in the 'Chain of Response' of Cross (1981).

Thematic category: Changes in their life circumstances that influenced their decision.

In the fifth group of questions (40 to 47) from the factor analysis, a factor emerged – which was named 'transitions' (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). This factor consists of eight items that relate to changes in the adults' life circumstances that influenced their decision to participate. They were specifically asked if they participated because one of the following had recently changed: their way of life

due to marriage, family and children; their perspective of life due to the death of a close friend or relative; their way of living due to divorce; their way of working due to a change in work environment; where they currently reside; their way of thinking and living due to losing their job; their way of living due to losing their property; or their way of life due to retirement. According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=1.40, median=1, mode=1), the respondents answered that there were no transitions in their lives that were related to their decision to attend EGL.

The 'transitions' factor did not influence adults' decision to attend secondary evening school and answers the fifth research question.

Thematic category: Changes they expect in their lives after their participation.

In the sixth group of questions (Questions 48 to 52) from the factorial analysis, the factor 'expected changes' emerged (Papadimitriou, 2019).

The five items that make up this factor are related to changes they expect in their lives and for which their participation will help them (see Table 8). According to the indicators of central tendency (Mean=2.91 Median=3, Mode=3), the respondents answered 'quite applies' that they expect changes in their lives by participating in the EGL.

The factor 'expected changes' is a finding as it was not present in the original model of Cross used and is quite important in the decision to participate. It answers the sixth research question.

Table 8: Factor analysis on Questions 48 to 52

Extracted Factor: Expected changes	Component
	1
Q49. The way I understand my social environment	,907
Q50. The way I deal with unpleasant events in my life	,877
Q48. The way I treat myself and other people	,869
Q51. The way I deal with criticism from others	,850
Q52. A change of scenery to 'escape' from my everyday life	,661

Thematic category: What encouraged their decision?

In the seventh group of questions (Questions 53 to 61), two factors emerged from the factorial analysis. From Questions 53-58, the factor 'opportunities'(Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019) emerged and from Questions 59 to 61, the factor 'disposition'.

There are six items that make up the ‘opportunities’ factor and they relate to opportunities that encouraged their decision to participate. In Table 9, we can see the loads of the questions that contribute to the factor.

According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.37, median=3, mode=3), the respondents answered ‘quite applies’ that the factor ‘opportunities’ encouraged them in their decision to participate in the EGL.

The ‘opportunities’ factor is quite important in the decision to participate and is linked to the fourth research question.

Table 9: Factor analysis on Questions 53 to 58

Extracted Factor: Opportunities	Component
	1
Q56. Friends or acquaintances	,774
Q57. Immediate family	,689
Q58. My work environment	,619
Q55. My easy commute to school	,608
Q53. Treatment by school teachers	,579
Q54. School opening hours	,558

The second factor consists of three items related to their availability to take advantage of the opportunity they have to participate in the EGL (it is about conditions that favour participation-favourable conditions). In Table 10, we see the loads of the questions that contribute to the factor.

According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.35, median=3, mode=4), the respondents answered ‘quite applies’ that the ‘disposition’ factor encouraged them in their decision to participate in the EGL.

The ‘disposition’ factor is a finding since it was not present in the original model of Cross used.

Table 10: Factor analysis on Questions 59 to 61

Extracted Factor: Disposition	Component
	1
Q60. There is no participation fee	,764
Q61. That I like school environment	,684
Q59. That I have a lot of free time at my disposal and wish to devote it to education	,667

Thematic category: What discouraged them?

From the factorial analysis carried out in the eighth group of questions (Questions 62 to 72), the factor ‘barriers’ emerged. This factor consists of eleven items related to barriers that discouraged their decision to participate. Specifically, they were asked if the following consist of a barrier to their participation: school hours, their age, health reasons, family obligations, the distance from school, the fact that they will return to a school environment and they do not feel comfortable with this idea, a lack of support from their employer, a lack of support from their friends and/or acquaintances, a lack of support from their immediate family, their compulsory attendance at all courses and the lack of financial subsidy of their participation by some state body. According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=1.77, median=2, mode=1), the respondents answered ‘applies a little’ that there were ‘barriers’ that made it difficult for them to take part in the EGL.

The factor ‘barriers’ did not significantly influence adults’ decision to participate and is linked to the fourth research question.

Thematic category: Information about the EGL.

In the ninth group of questions (Questions 73 to 80), four factors emerged from the factorial analysis: sufficient information (Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019) (Question 73), insufficient information (Question 74), information from other participants (Question 75), general sources of information (Questions 76 to 80).

The first factor comes from an item related to the adequacy of information they had before their participation in the EGL (Question 73). According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.44, median=3, mode=5), the respondents answered ‘quite applies’ that the “information” they had before their participation in the EGL was ‘sufficient’.

The second factor comes from an item related to the lack of information before their participation in the EGL (Question 74). According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=1.65, median=1, mode=1), the respondents answered ‘not applies at all’ that the “information” they had before their participation in the EGL was “insufficient”.

The third factor comes from an item related to the information they gathered from other participants before their participation in the EGL (Question 75). According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=3.13, median=3, mode=5), the respondents answered ‘quite applies’ that the “information” gathered by the participants before attending EGL “was from other participants”.

The fourth factor consists of five items related to the source of information they had before attending EGL (Questions 76-80). According to the indicators of central tendency (mean=1.81, median=2, mode=1), the respondents answered 'applies a little' that the information gathered by the participants before their participation in the EGL came from general sources of information.

The 'sufficient information' factor is quite important and seems to have positively influenced the final decision to participate (McGivney, 2003). Participants select information about EGLs from other participants (who have lived the experience). In any case, the role of information is important because it connects learners with the opportunities that exist (Cross, 1981). The 'sufficient information' factor answers the seventh and last question of the survey.

Discussion of the results

The factors that affect adults' decisions to engage in the EGL in the islands of Greece, as well as the strength of those influences, were evaluated using factorial data analysis. Four of the elements had a very strong effect. They consist of self-assessment, educational attitude, educational perspective and expectations (all of high significance). Seven of the elements are classified as 'quite' important, which are goals, improved family finances, expected changes, opportunities, disposition, sufficient information and information from other participants (all of medium significance). In the following discussion, a brief presentation of the most important research results is made based on the thematic categories.

The profile of the participants

From the profile of the adults who took part in the survey, it appears that men, young adults (18 to 24 years old, regardless of gender), people without work and with a low income (0 to 5,000 euros), people who are not married, those who do not have children and those who were born and raised in Greece (with Greek as their mother tongue) choose – more than other adults – to participate in the EGLs of the country's islands. The research shows that gender, age, professional and family status, individual income, mother tongue and the country of residence of adults interact with other factors and influence their decision (similar results are recorded in the EGLs research by Papadimitriou, 2019).

How do they evaluate themselves?

The ultimate choice to attend EGL seems to result from an interplay of endogenous and external variables. This process begins with the individual. Respondents "evaluate themselves favourably" in terms of their preparedness to engage (Cross, 1981; Papadimitriou, 2019).

What is their attitude towards education?

The participants have a favourable ‘attitudes towards education.’ According to the relevant theory, people with a positive attitude towards education and a positive self-evaluation seem to have confidence in themselves and their talents; they like participating in educational activities and regard it as a chance to grow (Cross, 1981). They feel that by participating, they will achieve their “goals” (Rubenson, 1977; Apt, 1978) and “expectations” (Rubenson, 1977; Cross, 1981). The expectancy-valence theory (Rubenson, 1977) relates to the importance of the participants’ goals, whereas expectancy refers to the participants’ belief that they will succeed because they have high self-esteem (Cross, 1981) and belief that they will achieve goals and expectations through their participation. Positive self-assessment and a positive attitude towards education are also recorded as two very important factors in the Papadimitriou’s previous research (2019) on EGLs.

What are their expectations and what do they want to achieve by their participation?

People that participate want to have an educated viewpoint – they want to complete *Lyceum*, which was an unrealised goal, and continue their education at university or another institution. Another conclusion is that they anticipate improving family finances and assisting the family budget, which is identified for the first time in research on EGLs. The educational perspective factor also stands out in terms of its effect on the decision to participate in previous research on EGLs (Papadimitriou, 2019).

Changes in their life circumstances that influenced their decision.

According to their replies, there are no substantial changes in their lives; there are clear ‘transitions’, which are connected to their choice to participate, although it is expected that attending the EGL would allow them to make the changes they expect in their life.

Changes they expect in their lives after participation.

The changes they expect most are to change how they treat themselves and other people and how they understand their social environment (the people they come into daily contact with).

How is their involvement encouraged or discouraged?

‘Opportunities’ and ‘disposition’ are listed as two reasons that influenced their decision to join. Regarding the ‘barriers’ (such as mandatory attendance in all classes, distance from school, lack of financial support, their age, working hours,

family obligations, and so on) that, along with the ‘opportunities’, play an important role in the decision to participate in general, they appear to have little influence on them, and participants eventually overcome them, having strong motivation and a strong desire to participate (Cross, 1981).

What information did they have, and where did it come from?

The adults of the Greek islands who participated in the research considered the knowledge they received about the EGL prior to their involvement to be adequate. The majority of the information they obtained came from “other participants” rather than generic sources of information. This was also discovered in a previous study of a similar kind (Papadimitriou, 2019). Participation requires access to information (McGivney, 2003; Papadimitriou, 2019). The ongoing enhancement of the quality of information, as well as the sources of information, should be a persistent objective for all given educational activities (Papadimitriou, 2019).

Conclusions

This study observed the characteristics influencing the choice to participate in EGLs of people living on the Greek islands, as well as the fact that a combination of reasons drives learners. The study found that adult engagement in evening secondary education is a complex phenomenon due to the participants’ individual traits and life situations.

Adults’ decision to participate in EGLs was heavily influenced by self-assessment, educational attitude, educational perspective and expectations. Other elements influencing their decision to engage included goals, increased family income, expected changes, opportunities, disposition, sufficient knowledge and information from other participants. But it would be intriguing to find out if the same traits noted in this survey have an effect on people in mainland Greece, how much they influence their decision to participate and if there are any disparities in these features.

The adult participation grid in EGLs in the Greek islands appears to be similar to the findings of a study on adult participation in EGLs throughout Greece (see Papadimitriou, 2019). Still, it differs significantly from the bibliographic data on participation (in educational activities) found in Greek and international literature.

Last but not least, the information provided allows us to better understand the motivations and learning needs of adult participants, allowing us to improve the way and orientation in which the EGL operates, as well as the corresponding

support policies. It also contributes to the design of an appealing study programme that takes into account the needs of male and female students from the islands of Greece.

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