The Benefits of Lifelong Learning for Wellbeing

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Outline

1. What is lifelong learning?
2. What are the benefits of education?
3. How does education affect our well-being?
4. Why are people engaged in lifelong learning?
5. Why should we care about lifelong learning?
6. Life Wide Learning and Well-being Survey
7. Concluding remarks
1. What is Lifelong learning (LL)?

- Basil Yeaxlee (1929) coined the term \( \rightarrow 85 \) years old
- “all learning activity taken throughout life” \(^1\)
- In general, the concept of LL is used in the context of occupational and economic benefits \(^2\)
- Lifewide learning \(^3\):
  1. formal
  2. non-formal
  3. informal
Lifewide Learning Model

- Birth
- Formal
- Non-Formal
- Lifewide
- Informal
- Lifelong
- Death
2. What are the Benefits of education?

- Life course: education, work & retirement
- Educational attainment
  → Well-being
  1. Health
  2. Life expectancy
  3. Happiness
Self-rated health by educational attainment

The higher the education, the better the health

- College Degree: 8% Bad, 92% Good
- Some College: 15% Bad, 85% Good
- High School: 20% Bad, 80% Good
- Less than High School: 37% Bad, 63% Good
The higher the education, the slower the health decline with aging
Life expectancy at age 25 by gender and education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Less than High School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Some College or More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Education and happiness by metropolitan areas

The higher the education (%), the happier the city is!
3. How does education influence our health? 

- Economic Resources
- Psychosocial Resources
- Health Lifestyle
- Health & Well-being
Benefits of continuing education/LL among mid-age to older adults

- Same as formal education $\rightarrow$ physical and mental health $^1$
- Brain health, cognitive function, Alzheimer’s disease, memory $^2$
- Enhanced social network $^3$
- Personal development, joy of learning $^4$
- “Ripples on a pond effect” $^5$
5. Why care about lifelong learning?

• Population aging 14% (2013) \(\rightarrow\) over 20% (2050) \(^1\)
• Health and well-being \(^2\)
• Formal schooling in youth to lifelong process \(^3\)
• Knowledge society \(^4\) & economy \(^5\)
• **However**, motivation for learning declines with aging \(^6\)
• Research has focused mainly on the **negative aspects** of LL participation \(\rightarrow\) Need to know more about how LL is done and how to continue learning!
6. Life Wide Learning and Well-being Survey

**Purposes:** To better understand the benefits of lifelong learning and to inform the OLLI at UNLV programs

- Health and well-being, social interactions, demographic characteristics, and participation in OLLI at UNLV
- Longitudinal survey
- Pilot survey and three waves of data
What is OLLI?

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNLV

• Designed for retired and semi-retired adults age 50+
• Continuing education
• Opportunity to meet new and interesting peers
• Variety of intellectual classes
Demographics

- Data from Spring 2014
- 330 OLLI participants (N = 1,125)
- Median age: 70
- 69% Women
- 91% White
Marital Status by Gender

Women: 78% Married, 22% Not Married
Men: 95% Married, 5% Not Married
Educational Attainment

- Less than high school: 0%
- High school: 6%
- Some college: 22%
- Bachelor's degree: 30%
- Master's degree: 32%
- Doctoral or professional degree: 10%
Health and Well-being

Self-rated health

- Poor: 0%
- Fair: 6%
- Good: 26%
- Very good: 39%
- Excellent: 30%

WHO Well-being Index [0 → 100 = ill → well]

Mean (SD) = 74 (16)
OLLI at UNLV

- 81% participated in OLLI in a previous semester
- 45% have been with OLLI for 1-4 years
- On average, the OLLI participants took 3.1 courses per semester
- Some took 15 courses!!
Why people participate

Motivations

1. Educational purposes (81%)
2. Social opportunities (10%)
3. To fill spare time (5%)

Other motivations: fun, stay active, work-related, ukulele, etc.
Participants Voices

Question: “Do you have any comments or suggestions for the OLLI program?”

Themes:

- Increase social interaction
- Increase extracurricular activities
- Member recruitment
- Invite speakers/lecturers
Research

Data collection, conference presentations, OLLI site presentations, data analysis, manuscript writing, etc.

2013
- Data collection (pilot-wave 1)
- Two conference presentations

2014
- Data collection (wave 2 & 3)
- Two conference presentations
- One scientific paper (in progress)

2015
- Data collection (wave 4 & special module)
- Conference presentation
- Data analysis → scientific paper
OLLI @ UNLV Survey Project
http://unlvollie.wordpress.com/

UNLV department of Sociology
http://www.unlv.edu/sociology

Osher Life Learning Institute at UNLV
http://ollie.unlv.edu/
7. Concluding remarks

• Lifelong learning → health, well-being, social network, life satisfaction, happiness, etc.
• Lifelong learning → economic resource, social connection and health behaviors
• Lifelong learning has been and is becoming more important in aging American society.
Thank you

Contact information

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References available upon request