

JIRSEA Issue: Vol. 22 No. 3

Sept/Oct 2024

ISSN 1675-6061

<http://www.seairweb.info/journal/index.aspx>

Submission Timeline

First submission: 25 June 2024

Revised submission: 26 July 2024

Final Submission: 12 November 2024

Acceptance: 29 November 2024

24th SEAIR Conference "Outstanding Paper"

A Study on The Motivations, Advantages, Barriers of Adult Learners of English: A Case of Female Students in Vietnam

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CITE ARTICLE: Nguyen, L.A.P., and Nguyen, T.H.B., (2024). A Study on The Motivations, Advantages, Barriers of Adult Learners of English: A Case of Female Students in Vietnam. *Journal of Institutional Research South East Asia*, 22(3), 392-411



Publisher: SEAIR Secretariat

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A Study on The Motivations, Advantages, and Barriers of Adult Learners of English: A Case of Female Students in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of educational discourse, the investigation into adult learning within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context has drawn considerable scholarly attention. With the increasing emphasis on language acquisition, there has been a corresponding surge in the enrollment of adult learners. This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of a specific cohort: five adult women, ranging from 26 to 41 years old, who are currently enrolled at the University of Foreign Language Studies (UFLs) in Danang, Vietnam. The university provides EFL programs tailored for adult learners, scheduled in the evening to accommodate their professional commitments. The study focuses on the motivations, advantages, and barriers encountered by these learners in their EFL learning journey. To comprehensively capture their perspectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English. The results were then presented in themes. The findings reveal an interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations among female adult learners. Amidst the demands of work and study, familial responsibilities emerge as both an advantage and barrier to EFL female adult learners. Overcoming these barriers requires concerted support from educational institutions and family networks. Thus, there exists a compelling need for increased institutional and familial involvement in fostering an environment conducive to the success of female adult learners in their pursuit of EFL proficiency.

Keywords: Female adult learners, EFL, Motivations, Advantages, Barriers

Introduction

The pursuit of English language proficiency has become increasingly vital in today's interconnected world, where effective communication transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. In Vietnam, the growing emphasis on English as a key skill for personal and professional advancement has led to a notable rise in adult learners seeking to enhance their language capabilities. This language is widely recognized as essential for meeting occupational demands and fulfilling the learning outcome requirements of various training programs.

One of the crucial elements of this linguistic journey is the VSTEP (Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency), which is essential in proving one's English proficiency—a requirement for undergraduate graduation and an entry criterion for postgraduate programs (Nguyen, 2019). Those who are unable to obtain this certificate may enroll in evening English classes through second-degree programs at universities and colleges specializing in language studies, allowing them to earn a degree upon completing the 30-month course. While both are valid for postgraduate programs and professional promotion, the VSTEP certificate is valid for two years. In contrast, the second degree has no expiration - an advantage that attracts a significant number of learners to these institutions.

Among these learners, women frequently face unique challenges (Chartrand, 1990) yet also carry specific motivations that profoundly influence their educational journeys (Bye et al., 2007). Understanding the dynamics of adult female learners in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is essential for developing tailored educational strategies that address their specific needs.

This study focuses on a cohort of female adult learners enrolled at the University of Foreign Language Studies in Danang, Vietnam, exploring the factors that drive their engagement with English language education. By examining their motivations—ranging from personal aspirations to professional requirements—this research aims to uncover the complexities of their learning journeys. Moreover, the study delves into the barriers these women encounter, including familial obligations, time constraints, and institutional limitations, which can significantly impact their ability to succeed in their studies (Ariwijaya & Ningsih, 2020).

Using qualitative research methods, this investigation provides a nuanced understanding of these learners' lived experiences, highlighting their resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Ultimately, the findings aim to inform educational practices and policies, fostering an environment that supports the growth and success of female adult learners in their quest for English language proficiency.

Literature review

Female adult learners

Adults are typically characterized as independent, self-directed learners who bring a wealth of life experiences and knowledge to their educational pursuits. They tend to be goal-oriented, value practical relevance, and expect respect in learning environments (Lieb, 1991). This group is highly diverse, with varying educational backgrounds and learning needs, marked by maturity and a deep understanding of their learning objectives (Svetina & Perme, 2004). Adult learners, driven by the desire to enhance both their personal and professional lives, actively seek opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge (Hudson, 2002; Tight, 1996). However, their quest for further education often coincides with the need to manage multiple responsibilities. Mali (2017) emphasizes that female adults frequently juggle non-academic obligations such as caring for family members, attending family-related events, and managing financial duties. Like other learner groups, female adult learners face unique motivations, advantages, and challenges in their pursuit of education.

Motivations

Described as a highly diverse group, adult female learners possess a wide range of preferences, needs, backgrounds, and skills. Their approach to learning is often life-centered, driven by various factors that sustain their active engagement in the learning process (Knowles, 1989). The concept of adult learning motivation is multifaceted and can be categorized in various ways. One of the most widely recognized theories is that of Pintrich and Schunk (1996), who distinguishes between two primary types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, which refers to engaging in an activity for the inherent satisfaction it provides, and extrinsic motivation, which involves participating in an activity to achieve an external outcome or reward.

Research by Kitiashvili and Tasker (2016) highlights gender differences in learning motivation. While older male learners are often motivated by economic reasons, female learners tend to have more complex motivations. Women returning to college frequently seek both professional development and personal fulfillment, aiming for self-actualization (Hardin, 2008). Furthermore, Bye, Pushkar, and Conway (2007) found that intrinsic motivation is particularly prevalent among non-traditional female students, suggesting that their drive to learn is deeply rooted in personal satisfaction and a love for learning. In research by UNITE (2006), the primary motivating factors for adult learners pursuing a university education are having a specific career goal (61.5%) and gaining higher qualifications (53.8%). Additionally, over half of re-entry among learners is driven by a desire to serve as role models for their children (Edwards, 1993). Notably, female learners are twice as likely as male students to cite these motivations for re-entry, with 63% of women compared to 33% of men expressing these reasons.

Advantages

Compared to younger learners, older adults have several advantages, such as better concentration, a stronger sense of responsibility, and broader knowledge and life experience (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). Additionally, female learners experience temporary advantages in certain areas. For mothers, the increasing involvement of grandparents in childcare—a growing global trend—provides additional support (Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2018). Meanwhile, single women can channel their energy into achieving their goals, including advancing their studies and careers (Menelao & Christoforos, 2022).

Institutional support plays a crucial role in the success of adult learners. Many educational institutions now offer tacit recognition of prior learning by reducing or eliminating entry requirements for mature students (Potter & Ferguson, 2003). Additionally, a variety of solutions, including "technical fixes," have been implemented to support these learners, such as enhancing induction programs, providing mentoring and support schemes, and ensuring that staff are flexible and accommodating. This flexibility allows students to better balance their family responsibilities with their academic workloads (Emma & Elodie, 2010).

Barriers

The challenges are even more pronounced for female learners, who must balance their studies with roles at work, home, and school (Chartrand, 1990). Due to their busy lifestyles, they often find it difficult to allocate sufficient time to academic tasks. Moreover, the increase in roles, demands, and time conflicts contributes to heightened stress and anxiety, particularly among female learners (Backels & Meashey, 1997). These factors create significant obstacles to academic achievement for women in educational settings. While research on the barriers faced by adult learners of English is extensive, comparatively little attention has been given to the challenges specific to female learners. Cross (1981) categorized learning barriers into three main types: institutional, situational, and dispositional. Accordingly, institutional barriers include policies and procedures established within the university, while situational barriers include factors such as family responsibilities, financial constraints, health issues, and transportation difficulties (Gotto & Martin, 2009). Dispositional barriers, on the other hand, are personal factors that are tied to learners' perceptions of their ability to succeed, fear of failure, and attitudes toward academic activities (Ekstrom, 1972). However, as noted by Toni and Lale (2020), although situational barriers can be demotivating, they often become a source of motivation for female learners to persist in their studies.

However, it is notable that there is a significant lack of research conducted in Vietnam that focuses on identifying the motivations, advantages, and barriers adult female learners encounter when learning a language, particularly English. Such studies are essential to improving both teaching methods and learning outcomes in this area.

Research Questions

The study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What drives female adult learners to study English as a Foreign Language (EFL)?
2. What advantages do female adult learners have in EFL education?
3. What barriers do female adult learners experience in EFL education?

Method

This study delves into the motivations, advantages, and barriers experienced by participants through a qualitative case study, focusing on five female adult learners from Vietnam's third-

largest public university. By analyzing these barriers, the research applies Ekstrom's theory of triangulated barriers (Ekstrom, 1972), offering a comprehensive framework to understand the multifaceted challenges these women encounter in their educational journeys. The study aims to shed light on the lived experiences of these learners, selected from a modest population, to provide meaningful insights into their academic and personal struggles and triumphs.

Data collection took place over one academic year (2023/2024), employing semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the primary methodology. These interviews were conducted individually, ensuring a safe and open environment for participants to share their narratives. Each session was digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and rigorously reviewed for clarity to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Participants were recruited during their second semester of the 2023 academic year, ensuring they had sufficient experience to reflect on their learning journey.

The research was conducted at Danang University of Foreign Language Studies, a renowned institution offering specialized programs tailored for adult learners under its Second-Degree program. This setting was strategically chosen as it provided access to a diverse group of working female learners representing a blend of personal, professional, and academic backgrounds. The unique context of these learners allowed the study to capture a rich tapestry of experiences, focusing on how these women navigate their dual roles as students and professionals. Their stories form the core of the larger study from which this data is derived, highlighting not just their challenges but also their resilience, aspirations, and strategies for overcoming barriers. Table 1 below shows the participants' bibliographical information.

Table 1: Participants' bibliographical information

Name	Age	Biographical notes	Interviewed (academic year)
Participant 1	26	Married; having 1 child; student of EFL, working full-time as a teacher at an international school.	2023-2024
Participant 2	29	Single student of EFL, working full-time as a government official.	2023-2024
Participant 3	35	Married; student of EFL, having 2 children, working as a full-time doctor at a public hospital.	2023-2024
Participant 4	41	Divorced; student of EFL, having 1 child, having a private educational center.	2023-2024
Participant 5	33	Married; student of EFL, having no children, working full-time for a tourist company.	2023-2024

Findings and Discussions

Motivations

The study revealed that the primary motivations driving female adult learners to study English encompass both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsically, these learners express a genuine interest in the subject, finding joy and intellectual stimulation in mastering a new language. This reflects a deeper quest for self-actualization, as they aim to unlock their potential and achieve a sense of personal growth and accomplishment. Extrinsically, their motivations are closely tied to practical and professional aspirations. Many are motivated by the desire to enhance their qualifications, recognizing English proficiency as an asset in achieving career advancement and competitiveness in the job market. Additionally, they wish to become proficient and independent English speakers, seeking to gain confidence and autonomy in working in various professional and social contexts.

Participant 1 shared that she began learning English upon realizing it was a necessity. *“Firstly, it is because of my interests. I have long liked learning another language, such as English. My major is literature education, which has nothing to do with English, and I do not use it in my job either. However, my plans require a lot of English, so I decided to enroll in an English language course to partly improve my language skills and partly meet my knowledge needs so that I can continue to pursue my personal passion.”*

Alternatively, driven by a stronger motivation to improve themselves or expand their job opportunities like Participant 2. *“There are many reasons. First, I see that everyone needs English. Second, my current job does not require much English, but I want to step out of my comfort zone, know more, and expand my thinking. Third, if there is a chance, I had a childhood dream of living and working abroad. I think that studying may not guarantee I will go, but if I do not study, I definitely will not go. So, I enrolled to study.”*

Additionally, some learners are extrinsically motivated by job requirements, the potential for promotion, or other professional purposes. Participant 3 admitted that *“I want to have an English certificate so that I can pursue higher education in my field of expertise,”* and Participant 4 revealed that *“I opened a cultural education center, and in the near future, I plan to invite teachers to teach English, so I need to know English...Moreover, my children are of school age, and I want to accompany them in this subject, so that is also a reason for*

me to learn English". Some aim to polish their CV. Participant 5 said, "To add to my CV. My future plan is to teach English as well."

Interestingly, while Alshebou (2019) suggested that extrinsic motivations, such as improving financial situations, were significant, the current research, aligning with Al-Yaseen (2018) and Alshebou and Taqi (2019), shows that external pressures or obligations do not primarily drive most female adult EFL learners. Instead, their motivations stem from a genuine passion for the English language and the pursuit of their personal goals, reflecting a stronger intrinsic motivation among the five participants.

Extrinsic factors like job demands are deemed more critical than financial incentives. For example, Participant 2 noted that salary increases are not her main concern; rather, it is the demands of her job that necessitate a high level of English proficiency. "Getting a raise is unlikely, but in my official work, there is a task of translating documents. If I want to do it, I need an English language certificate."

Furthermore, the study highlights that female adult EFL learners may have distinct motivations, often influenced by societal or economic factors. For instance, Participant 4 is motivated by the desire to stay current with global trends, particularly the use of technology in the workplace. "...Secondly, technology is developing, and communication channels are expanding, so I need English to access them more easily."

In general, these motivations highlight a dynamic interplay between personal fulfillment and external goals, demonstrating how these learners align their academic pursuits with broader aspirations for self-efficacy, empowerment, and life enrichment. Their determination underscores the role of language learning not only as a tool for communication but also as a pathway to personal and professional transformation.

Advantages

The first advantage for the participants is their strong passion for learning English as their primary purpose for registering for the course. Their intrinsic motivation drives them to dedicate time and effort to their studies, fueled by a desire to fulfill personal aspirations, such as pursuing higher education opportunities and enhancing their job performance. This passion not only sustains their commitment but also motivates them to overcome the challenges of balancing work, family, and school responsibilities. It acts as a source of resilience, enabling them to stay focused on their goals despite the obstacles they face.

The second advantage is the substantial support they receive from their teachers, which plays a vital role in their learning journey. EFL teachers act as mentors and facilitators, tailoring their teaching methods to meet the unique needs of adult learners. These teachers recognize the challenges that come with returning to education as an adult, including time constraints, varied proficiency levels, and the pressure of managing multiple roles. By providing personalized guidance, clear explanations, and practical strategies, they help bridge gaps in understanding and build the learners' confidence. Moreover, the emotional support offered by teachers cannot be understated. They create an encouraging and inclusive learning environment where adult learners feel comfortable expressing their difficulties and seeking help. Teachers often go beyond their formal roles, offering flexibility and understanding to accommodate the students' busy schedules and personal challenges. This combination of academic and emotional support fosters a sense of belonging and motivation, enabling learners to stay engaged and progress steadily toward their goals.

Together, the learners' passion and the supportive role of their teachers form a powerful foundation for success, highlighting the importance of both internal motivation and external encouragement in adult language learning.

Participant 1 shared that *“The teachers are also teaching in a very supportive and encouraging manner, slowing down because they know we are adult learners... Before attending the classes, I heard that adult learners learn for the sake of it. However, I genuinely want to learn, so I was also worried that the teachers might teach just for the sake of it, but they truly teach with dedication and offer much encouragement... Teachers are also the ones we can define in.”*

Participant 2 said, *“Through the teaching process of the instructors, I have supplemented my knowledge and, combined with my own efforts and the learning methods guided by the teachers, I have seen a significant improvement in myself. The praise from the teachers motivates me to keep striving harder.”*

The result also reveals an interesting role of family in the learning journeys of female adult learners, serving both as a barrier and an advantage. For some participants, particularly married women and single mothers, family responsibilities can be a significant obstacle. Juggling child-rearing, household duties, and academic commitments creates a heavy burden, often leaving them with limited time and energy to dedicate to their studies. This balancing

act can lead to feelings of stress and frustration, potentially affecting their academic performance and motivation.

On the other hand, the study highlights the positive impact of family support, which can greatly tackle these challenges. In the Vietnamese cultural context, the role of extended family members, especially grandparents, emerges as a crucial factor. Grandparents often step in to care for grandchildren and manage household tasks, allowing adult learners to focus on their professional and educational pursuits. This cultural practice provides support that helps women overcome the barriers associated with their dual roles. In fact, Vietnamese family responsibilities are deeply ingrained, with grandparents often assuming responsibility for childcare, like practices in other cultures around the world (Hayslip et al., 2017).

For example, Participant 3 and Participant 5 benefited greatly from their own family. With the active involvement of their parents or in-laws in childcare and household management, they were able to dedicate more time and energy to their studies without neglecting their familial responsibilities. This supportive environment not only eased their practical burdens but also gave them the emotional encouragement needed to persist in their educational goals.

Participant 3 said, “I do not have much time to take care of my children, but with the support of my parents and husband at home, my children are doing fine.”

Participant 5 happily shared, “*Luckily, I have my parents to help with childcare...*”

The advantages mentioned above are particularly significant for adult female learners, as they play a crucial role in sustaining their commitment to their learning journey.

Barriers

Understanding these barriers is crucial for educational institutions to develop strategies that help female adult learners overcome challenges and enhance their educational experiences. By addressing these barriers, institutions can improve the retention and success of female learners in English language programs (Ariwijaya & Ningsih, 2020).

Female adult learners encounter several barriers to learning, which can be categorized into three main types: situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers.

Situational Barriers

Situational barriers are particularly pronounced for female students, who often take on multiple responsibilities and face constraints that make their educational journey more challenging. One common barrier is family responsibilities. Many female learners, especially those with children, face significant challenges in balancing the demands of child-rearing, household responsibilities, and academic commitments. Furthermore, some female learners often find themselves sacrificing their social lives to focus on their studies.

In fact, in Vietnamese culture, the responsibility for child-rearing is predominantly assigned to women, leading to feelings of guilt when mothers are separated from their children or unable to fulfill their obligations (Mestechkina et al., 2014). In this context, Participant 1 expressed her feelings as follows: *"Another difficulty that I think mothers with young children will face is that when they spend time on work and study, they will miss their child's first moments. For example, the first time the child speaks or sings a song, I cannot witness it. Alternatively, when I come home from work and hear from my husband that today, our child learned something new, I cannot see those moments firsthand. This is also a disadvantage, and because of the great distance, I cannot meet my child frequently, which somewhat causes emotional distance."*

Participant 4 shared, *"For working people like me, there are many difficulties. First, there is the job itself. We have to arrange things so that the job is balanced. Secondly, at our age, with children, besides work, we also have family and other relationships, which affects our ability to attend classes."*

Otherwise, Participant 2 expressed concern about the possibility of marriage, given her lack of time for personal relationships. *"I am quite old, already 29 years old, and starting to study from scratch now is a bit late... Studying requires dedicating time to it. Since I am working, I need to have time for my own health and my family, including my extended family. Now that I am studying, I do not have time to explore relationships that could lead to marriage. It is not that all my time is gone, but it does take up much time."* Participant 1 has had to sacrifice time for social and kinship relationships, which are highly valued in Vietnamese society, to focus on her studies. *"Another difficulty, which I think is hard to accept, is that when studying, I have to give up social gatherings, celebrations, and parties with family, friends, and colleagues."*

Health issues and the lack of emotional support can also pose significant obstacles. Adult learners, especially working mothers, often face fatigue or health problems due to the demands of maintaining a work-life-study balance. As a divorced mother, Participant 4 faced significant challenges in balancing her responsibilities—caring for her children, working to earn income, and studying in the evenings. With no one to assist her, she sometimes brought her children to class. *"I occasionally had to leave class early because my kids were too noisy and disturbed the others. I felt so embarrassed... I could only study late at night after they went to bed."* Serving as both mother and father, she often felt overwhelmed and broke down in tears under the immense pressure she faced as she had to do everything on her own, which partly led her to unexpected health issues. These health challenges can hinder their ability to focus on their studies and participate in learning activities consistently. Participant 4 shared, *"I often caught a cold due to the overloading work and study, so sadly, I sometimes had to skip classes..."*

Financial constraints are another prevalent challenge. Education-related expenses, such as tuition fees, learning materials, and transportation costs, can be a heavy burden for adult learners, many of whom are also the breadwinners of their families. This financial strain can lead to stress and, in some cases, limit their ability to engage in academic activities fully. In this case, it appears that tuition fees do not largely impact their ability to afford education since they in Vietnam are lower compared to other countries (Vietnam Briefing, n.d.). Participant 5 shared, *"Tuition fee is not a big deal..."*. However, additional expenses, such as the cost of learning materials and transportation, present significant concerns for those who are divorced kids. Participant 4 said, *"We have to pay for copyright books and gasoline; they cost quite a bit since we drive quite far from work to school..."*

Besides, conflicts with work schedules can prevent learners from attending classes or studying effectively. Participant 2 said, *"Additionally, at work, there are many days with sudden meetings or tasks that go beyond working hours, so when I am working, I do not have time to complete tasks outside of working hours. If there is an important task, I have to skip classes."* As a doctor, Participant 3 struggles to find time for studying. *"My job is really stressful, and I often have to study professional skills, so my time for learning English is quite limited."*

Also, transportation difficulties further cause these barriers. For example, Participant 1 resides in a different city from her educational institution, requiring her to commute long distances. This not only consumes valuable time and energy but also adds logistical and financial pressures. Such transportation challenges can reduce learners' accessibility to classes and

educational resources, impacting their academic progress. *“Firstly, my family lives in Hoi An while I am studying and working in Da Nang, so the distance between me and my family is quite far. After finishing my studies, it is also late, so I have to stay in Da Nang. Secondly, I have a 20-month-old child, so when I go to school, I have little time to take care of my child, my husband, and my family. There are situations such as when the child is sick or when my husband is busy at work or must meet deadlines, and there is no one to take care of the child.”*

These situational barriers underscore the complex realities female adult learners face in pursuing their education.

Institutional Barriers

Although the participants agreed that they have received adequate academic support from the university and that the enrollment procedures and policies are generally designed to accommodate their needs, they continue to face challenges related to the rigidity of class schedules. Many of the learners expressed a strong desire for more flexible learning options, such as online classes, which would better align with their busy personal and professional lives. The current schedule, predominantly fixed, does not accommodate those who juggle family responsibilities, work obligations, or long commutes.

Participant 1 shared, *“With 8 hours a day for work and an additional 3 hours for studying, even though I really want to improve the knowledge I have learned, it is difficult for me and others to find time to do homework or to watch an extra video or to practice any skills. We cannot find time for self-study and skill enhancement, so each day we go to school, we are faced with the situation where we have not mastered the old material, and the new material already comes in.”*

It is obvious that these institutional barriers partially hinder the learning progress of adult female learners.

Dispositional Barriers

All four participants have encountered significant difficulties due to the lack of opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. This has hindered their progress in developing the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. While classroom instruction provides foundational knowledge, the absence of real-world practice limits their ability to reinforce and apply what they learn. For these learners, opportunities to engage in

English outside of class, such as through conversation partners, language exchange programs, or immersive environments, are crucial for building fluency and confidence.

Participant 3 expressed, “Another problem is our environment because, *in our field, there are few opportunities to use English, which limits our ability to practice this foreign language.*”

Furthermore, the fear of failure and anxiety about academic performance are significant concerns for them due to their age. Participant 4 said, “*Additionally, there is the issue of age, as we are over 40 years old, making it harder to remember vocabulary... if I had a wish, I would wish to be a few years younger to start learning English earlier, with more enthusiasm and higher concentration.*”

Additionally, negative attitudes towards educational activities and self-doubt regarding their capabilities further contribute to their challenges. A lack of self-determination and reliance on personal motivation to overcome these obstacles also play a significant role. In fact, Participant 1 sometimes loses confidence, doubts the process, and has negative thoughts about her studies. “*Sometimes I think about giving up; I feel like I cannot go on. It is too much for me...*”

The dispositional barriers presented above pose a significant concern for female adult learners, greatly impacting their ability to succeed in their educational pursuits.

In summary, these barriers can significantly impact the educational experiences and outcomes of female adult learners. Divorced women with kids face greater challenges than married women with kids when pursuing further learning. They often struggle with low self-confidence, negative past experiences, and emotional distress, which hinder their focus and motivation.

Financial difficulties are more pronounced for divorced women, who may lack the financial support and shared childcare responsibilities that married women often benefit from. This lack of support can lead to increased stress and difficulty managing both childcare and educational responsibilities.

In contrast, married women often have emotional stability, financial support, and shared responsibilities, allowing for better time management and a more supportive learning environment. Overall, divorced women with kids encounter more complex barriers, making it

significantly harder for them to pursue further education compared to their married counterparts.

On the other hand, single women or married women without kids typically only face fewer barriers, primarily related to learning itself. They are typically better able to balance their time between study and work.

Conclusion

In summary, this study underscores the complex interplay of motivations and barriers faced by female adult learners in their pursuit of English language proficiency. While intrinsic motivations, such as personal passion and the desire for self-improvement, significantly drive these learners, extrinsic factors like job requirements and the need for professional advancement also influence their educational journeys.

The findings reveal that despite facing various situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers—such as family responsibilities, time constraints, and limited opportunities for practice—these learners exhibit remarkable resilience and determination. The support from family and teachers emerges as a crucial element in facilitating their learning experiences.

Implications

After exploring the motivations, advantages, and challenges faced by female adult learners of English in Vietnam, our research highlights several key implications for educational institutions and policies.

First, to reduce institutional barriers, academic entities should implement strategies around curriculum and accessible information. In terms of curriculum, it is essential to develop relevant programs with practical coursework aligned with learners' needs. Furthermore, institutions should create user-friendly websites where learners can access information about course schedules, academic procedures, exam results, and more. Supportive staff should also always be available to assist learners with questions and inquiries.

In addition, to help learners manage situational constraints, education organizations should emphasize flexibility and convenience, which are critical for female adult students. Offering project-based, online, evening, or weekend classes can minimize time commitment while maximizing efficiency. This approach allows female students to better balance their time between work, family, and study. Providing on-campus English classes for children could be

an excellent option, allowing mothers to bring their children along while they attend their own classes.

Finally, to overcome dispositional challenges, women students should be able to receive constant personalized support from staff and mentors. Tutorials, workshops on English learning skills and speaking clubs are essential for these learners to build their confidence and foster a sense of community.

Overall, the study advocates for a comprehensive approach to adult education that creates an environment that supports female learners' success in mastering English.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has several limitations, including a small and homogeneous sample size, which may not fully capture the diverse experiences of female adult learners across different contexts. The focus on Vietnam limits the generalizability of the findings, and the qualitative nature of the research may introduce bias, making it challenging to apply the insights broadly. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample, conduct longitudinal studies to track changes over time and explore the experiences of learners in different cultural contexts. By addressing these limitations and implementing these recommendations, future studies can enhance the understanding of female adult learners and inform the development of more effective educational programs and policies.

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APPENDIX

Questions for Interview

1. How old are you?
2. What kind of work do you do?
3. What is your marital status?
4. What motivates you to learn English as a second language?
5. What advantages or strengths do you have while learning English as a second language?
6. What challenges do you face while learning English?
7. If you could change anything about your current situation to make learning English easier, what changes would you make?
8. What are your plans after completing your English studies?

