ASL – Adult Self-Learning: Supporting Learning Autonomy in a Technology-Mediated Environment

Field Research Summary Report of All the Partners - Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University

IO1: Definition of an operative model for teaching learning low qualified adults in an online environment

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Executive Summary

In the framework of Intellectual Output 1: An operative model for teaching-learning low-qualified adults in an online environment, partners delivered a questionnaire in the respective language to a total of 85 participants (key persons, e.g. educators, adult education managers, policy-makers, etc.) with the view to compare the variety of online learning approaches for low-qualified and low-skilled adult learners in order to realize an operative model that will be applied for the project training activities. The partners delivered the questionnaire via online survey platforms, but seven respondents in two countries filled the questionnaire by paper-and-pencil administration.

## 1. Results of the Field Research

An online survey was translated by the respective project partners into their native language and was sent to over 110 adults. A total of 85 surveys were returned with completed items for computing the responses to each item in the questionnaire. Respondents were 46 females, 35 males and 4 of unspecified gender. The age distribution for the respondents was as follows: 4 over 65 years old, 14 between the ages of 56-65, 25 between the ages of 46-55, 21 between the ages of 36-45 and 21 between the ages of 25-35.
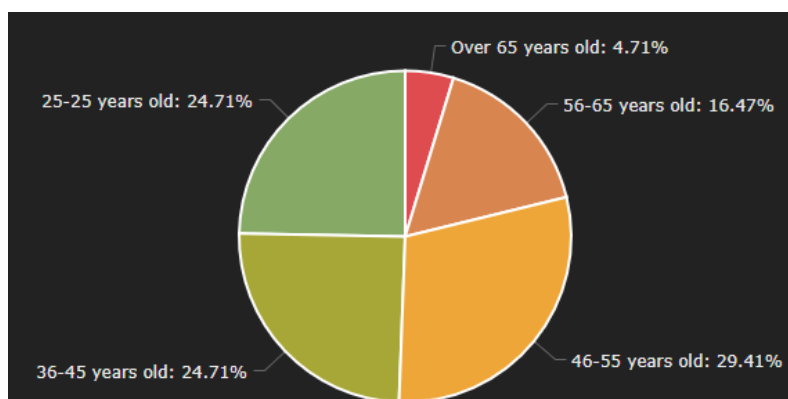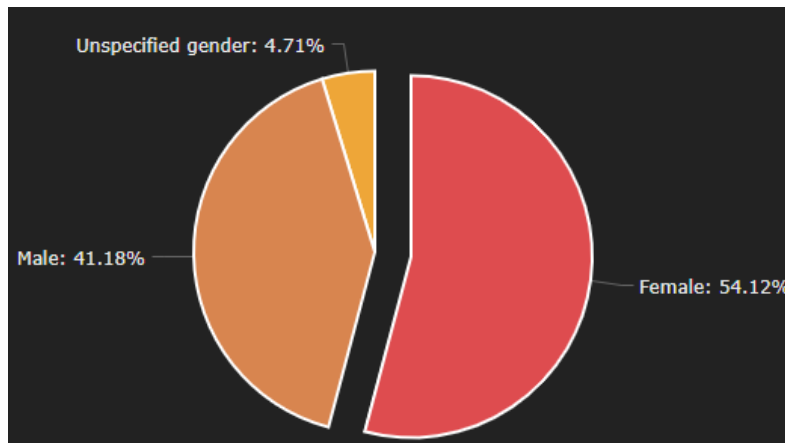
Except for one participant who lives in a small town and nine respondents living in the countryside, all of the participants reportedly live in a city. As for the financial status of the respondents, the majority of the participants reported to have average income. The annual income distribution of the respondents was as follows: 43 average, 23 slightly lower than the average, 14 slightly higher than the average and five very low.
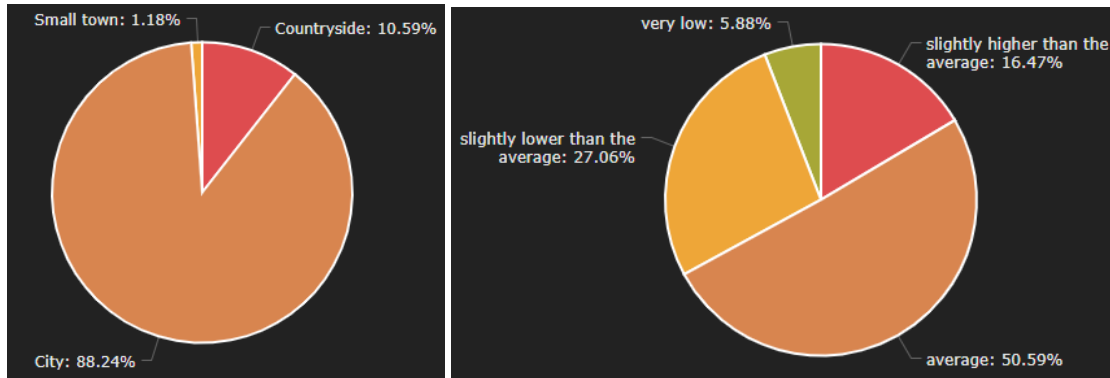
Participants represent a wide range of educational levels from secondary school level to doctoral degree level. Majority of the respondents' level of education is reportedly bachelor's degree, followed by vocational school/college and master's degree. One respondent preferred not to specify his/her level of education. Almost all of the respondents reportedly used internet to search for information.
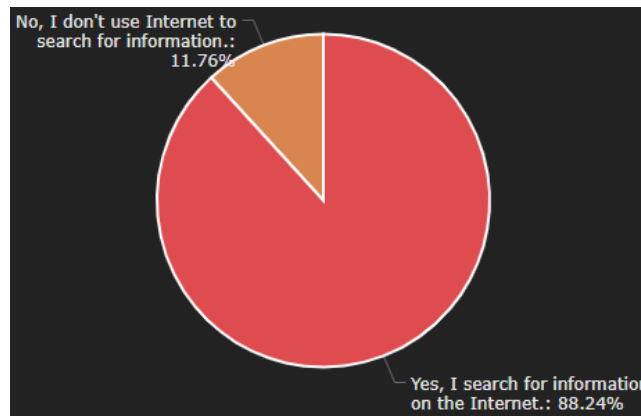
As to describing the level of digital awareness of the respondents, the results indicate that the majority of the respondents have access both to computers and smartphones.
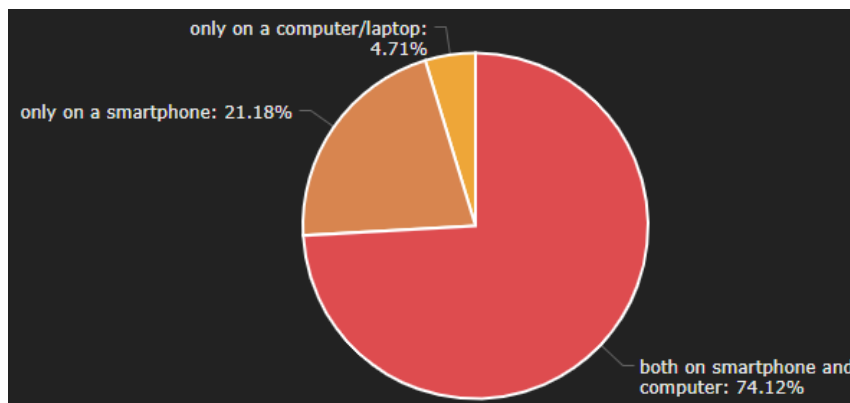
The respondents were asked to specify how often they use a computer/laptop and smartphone/tablet, the frequency distribution is as follows:
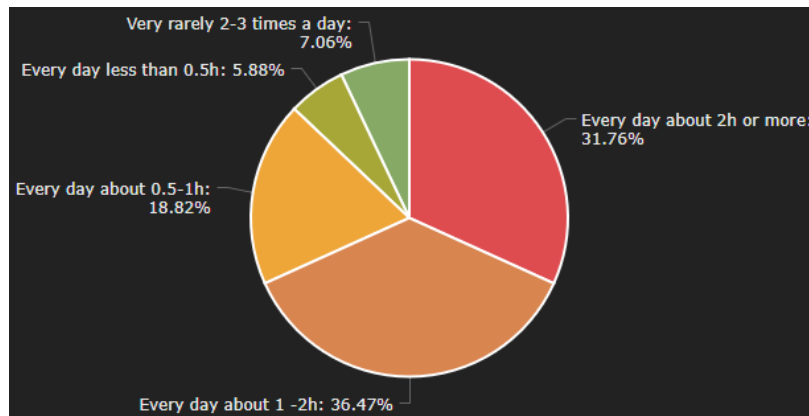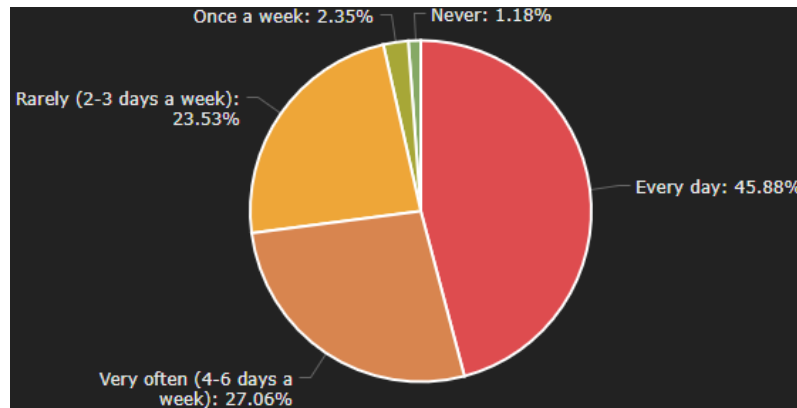
As regards the level of digital literacy, almost 70 percent of all the respondents classified themselves as either "basic users" or "independent users". Proficient users account for 21.33% of the participants. Basic users are able to search, use a mobile phone or e-mail, share files and content online. Independent users are able to use different search engines to find information online and use online services such as public services, e-banking, online shopping, Word/Excel.
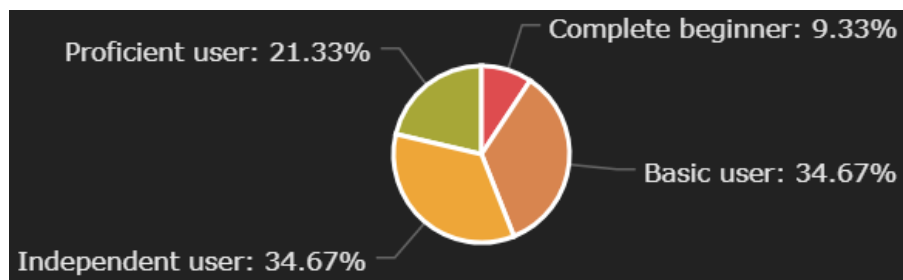

In an attempt to understand the respondents' interest in education, all the groups were asked if they had participated any educational event in the last six months and in the last two years. The distribution for the respondents' participation in an educational activity in the last 2 years was as follows:

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5 respondents: formal education (secondary school, high school)

20 respondents: formal education (post-graduate qualification courses)

30 respondents: non-formal education (supervised by professionals in handicrafts, language, IT, physical activity etc)

30 respondents: informal/self-learning (YouTube, Social media, books, etc.)

20 respondents: no kind of participation at the moment
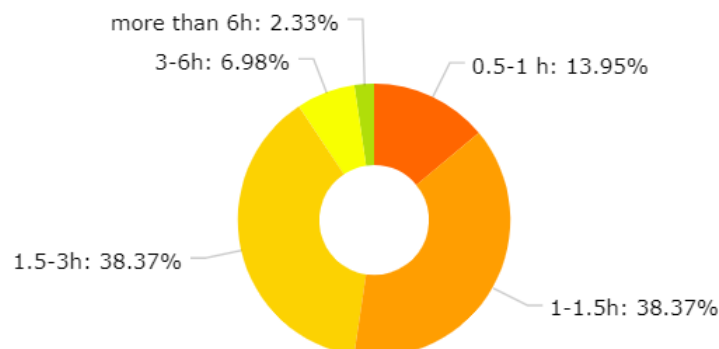
The distribution for the last 6 months was as follows:

1 respondents: formal education (secondary school, high school)

11 respondents: formal education (post-graduate qualification courses)

16 respondents: non-formal education (supervised by professionals in handicrafts, language, IT, physical activity etc)

30 respondents: informal/self-learning (YouTube, Social media, books, etc.)

35 respondents: no kind of participation at the moment
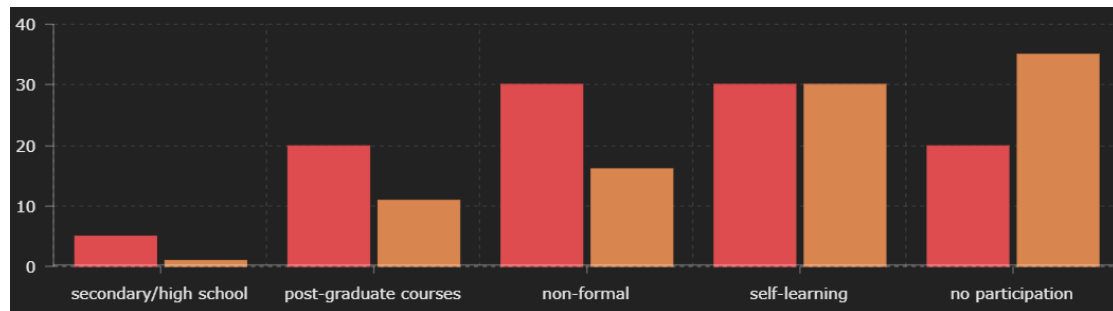
*red columns: last 2 years   **orange columns: last 6 months

In the next section of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to identify their interest in engaging in training activities and preferred training methods and tools. The answers to the questions "How many hours per week would you be available for learning activities (lectures, classes, webinars, etc.)" and "How much time would you be available for self-learning every day" are shown below.

How many hours per week would you be available for learning activities?

more than 6h: 2.33%
3-6h: 6.98%
0.5-1 h: 13.95%
1.5-3h: 38.37%
1-1.5h: 38.37%

How much time would you be available for self-learning every day?

- 15-20m: 1.18%
- 20-30m: 4.71%
- 30-45m: 17.65%
- 45-60m: 25.88%
- 60-90m: 40.00%
- more than 90m: 10.59%

🔴 15-20m	1	🟠 20-30m	4	🟠 30-45m	15
🟡 45-60m	22	🟡 60-90m	34	🟢 more than 90m	9
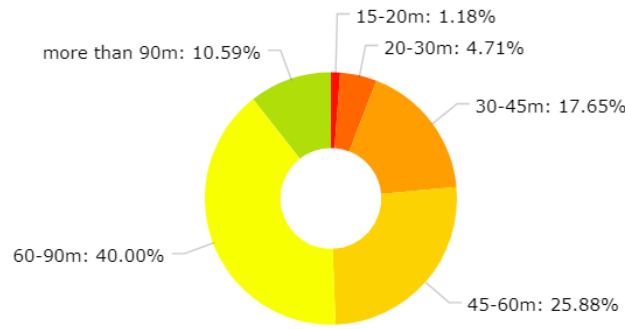
The participants were asked what they would like to learn to improve their knowledge. Although the responses had a wide range of content including both general and specific areas, it is important to note some common points. The majority of the participants from all the countries stated that they would like to learn more about technology, have more advanced technical skills and computer skills, and improve their professional knowledge. Other more specific examples were found as automotive, kitchen, childcare, and architecture, E-learning, Language learning, IT and photographic knowledge, ability to use online courses and learn to produce multimedia content in various formats, and fake news. Some of the participants reflected their interest in other scientific fields such as science and history, technology, art, psychology, and sociology.

The wide range of activities learned could be more effective if the factors that motivate the learners are involved in the process. Most participants stated that learning something that they will benefit and interest them will provide the motivation they need. However, other important answers included getting a certificate at the end of the learning activity, accessing courses free of charge, engaging in activities that will contribute to professional knowledge, finding better job opportunities through the education received, and feeling better through personal development.

The participants were asked about the barriers to their learning. As most training programs require financial support, "lack of money" was among the top-mentioned barriers for the participants. Another very frequently mentioned barrier was

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"insufficient information about course content". The participants reportedly could not find interesting education materials partly because they do not have comprehensive information about the course content. Another frequently mentioned barrier was a lack of knowledge of the language. Since most programs provided at an international level requires an advanced level of English as well, a lack of knowledge of foreign language poses an important barrier for most of the participants. Finally, a large number of participants reported to have lack of time for the learning activities available.

The participants were asked about the preferred ways of learning. "Practical workshops with experts" and "compilation of video materials" were among the top-mentioned answers. However, they also give importance to benefitting from opportunities of consulting experts and hearing lectures from the people who are experts in the field. Educational courses with a certain number of lectures and printed handouts seem to be preferred less, but still important for a group of individuals. It is also important to note that to some participants, accessing the course content through audio materials is a learning preference.

3. Conclusion

The field research in the Intellectual Output 1 aimed to identify adult learners learning needs and opportunities. Majority of the participating individuals, who had an almost balanced gender distribution, were in the 46-55 years old age group. Hence, all of them are familiar with the technology and stated their interest in benefitting from learning opportunities. However, factors such as lack of money, lack of time, and insufficient course content prevent them from benefitting from educational contents effectively. They would like to learn through practical workshops with experts or using video materials to learn in their own pace. However, consulting to experts is given importance. To majority of the participants, updating their knowledge about this constantly-changing world about computers, internet, online sources, technical issues, etc. is of great importance. They would like to learn how to cope with the innovations in the field of technology. Such educational content seems to motivate them with the personal and professional contribution it will bring, but a large group of participants reported to use educational opportunities for improving their knowledge in a wide range of fields they have been interested in. According to most participants, providing them with a certificate at the end of the training program and also improving their knowledge in a way to improve their personal and professional development are the motivating factors.