



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

Lived Experiences of Amateur Adult Piano Learners

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The
Frances Clark Center



A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of several overlapping, torn-edge pieces of paper in shades of orange, red, and dark green.

INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS
2. SELECTIVE LITERATURE REVIEW
3. METHODOLOGY
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS
5. CONCLUSIONS



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. Providing Insights for Piano Teachers to Better Understand Their Adult Students.
2. Exploring Unique Perspectives on Adult Learning Experiences.

R ESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the perceptions of career-aged amateur adults learning piano?
2. How do the perceptions further inform and broaden adult piano education?



*S*ELECTIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Define Career-Aged Adults
2. Explore Andragogy
3. Examine Adult Learner
Characteristics

CAREER AGED ADULT

Ages 30-55

Swenson (2006)

Piano's Popularity
Among Career-Aged
Adults

Research Gap in Adult
Piano Learning

- END OF SCHOOLING
- WORKING
- LIVING APART FROM FAMILY
- MARRIAGE
- PARENTHOOD
- BIOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL
CHANGES

(SCHAIE & WILLIS, 2002)



ANDRAGOGY

The art and science of helping adults learn.
Malcolm Knowles (1913-1997)

andr (men) + agogos (leader of) = andragogy
Alexander Kapp (1800-1869)

Adult Piano Education

ADULT LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS



- Bring life experience to their learning.
- Self-motivated and self-directed.
- Have different relationships with their teachers than children.
- Prefer a customized learning-centred approach.
- Need to be emotionally and physically comfortable to learn.
- Social, physiological, and psychological changes during the career-aged period affect the experiences of adults learning piano.



SOCIAL

- **Mid-life Crises**

Suddenly faced with an awareness of their own advancing age and mortality.

- **Sandwich Generation**

Taking care of both their children and aging parents.

PHYSIOLOGICAL

- They need more time to transfer theoretical knowledge into physical playing energy.
- They have difficulty with specific skills, including manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination.
- They feel physical tiredness quicker.
- They experience visual and auditory deficiencies.



PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Their learning processes tend to be on a “knowledge-first basis.”
- They may be reluctant to try something unfamiliar for fear of embarrassment, related to their inner critic, self-consciousness, or negative self-judgment.

METHODOLOGY

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

“IPA is a method designed to understand people’s lived experience[s] and how they make sense of it in the context of their personal and social worlds.”

-Smith & Nizza, 2021, 3

PARTICIPANTS



LAURA

35

Research Scientist
60 min weekly lessons
throughout the year



AVA

54

Pharmacist (retired)
45 min weekly lessons,
no lessons during
Summer



BRUCE

37

Mechanical Engineer
30 min weekly lessons
throughout the year

FINDINGS

and

DISCUSSIONS



Four THEMATIC FINDINGS

Fulfilling a Long-Held Dream

**The Importance of Autonomy and Making Conscious,
Meaningful Choices**

Acknowledging the Challenges of Being an Adult Learner

Feeling a Sense of Joy



FULFILLING A LONG-HELD DREAM

- Previous brief and disrupted experiences with instrumental lessons.
- Planning the idea of learning piano.
- Finding the right timing to start piano lessons.



THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTONOMY AND MAKING CONSCIOUS, MEANINGFUL CHOICES

- Self-motivation and commitment.
- Learning at their own pace.
- Individualized curriculum.
- Choice of repertoire.

Ava: “No one’s
forcing me to do
it, but I like to do
it.”



ACKNOWLEDGING THE CHALLENGES OF BEING AN ADULT LEARNER

Bruce: “I think that the technical challenge triggers [the frustration]. If I didn’t hit the right key, the internal criticism, and the feeling like, oh my God, I can’t believe this is taking so long [to learn].”

- Frustration and discomfort in practice.
- Performance anxiety.
- Feeling a lack of physical coordination.
- Accepting discomfort and making efforts to improve.



FEELING A SENSE OF JOY

- Feeling joyful moments while playing.
- Making a more profound and meaningful connection between music and life.

WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF BEING AMATEUR ADULT PIANO STUDENTS?

- Social, physiological, and psychological characteristics.
- To fulfill a long-held dream.
- Making conscious and meaningful choices in their learning and practice.
- Have autonomy in their learning.
- Acknowledge age-related challenges and strive to overcome them.
- Feel a sense of joy when making music.
- Extend their music interests to cultivate a more meaningful lifestyle.



HOW DO THE PERCEPTIONS FURTHER INFORM AND BROADEN ADULT PIANO EDUCATION?

- Understand your students.
- Assist them in bridging theoretical knowledge to playing.
- Be open-minded with method books and repertoire.
- Be creative and flexible and create a positive learning environment.



CONCLUSIONS

Specific intentions and motivations.

Age and life experience result in various social, physiological, and psychological factors that affect learning.

An unexpected but exciting finding: They cultivate meaning in music outside of just playing and use it to enrich their lives.

Limitations

- Dual role as a piano instructor and researcher
- Age difference between the participants

FURTHER RESEARCH

- Larger number of participants
- More culturally diverse group of career-aged adult students

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THANK YOU

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