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Formerly Incarcerated Women Describe Study Habit Challenges Within Adult Education Programs

Milan Kiana Williams
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Milan Kiana Williams

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Formerly Incarcerated Women Describe Study Habit Challenges Within Adult Education

Programs

by

Milan Kiana Williams

MA, American Public University, 2014

BS, University of Maryland University College, 2012

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

Transitioning back into society successfully after incarceration comes with its downfalls, but educational support could potentially address transitional success, especially for formerly incarcerated women. Previous research mainly focused on exploring education options and recidivism outcomes for formerly incarcerated men. There is limited research regarding formerly incarcerated women and their educational needs within adult education programs. The purpose of this qualitative inquiry study was to describe study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs. A further aim was to develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy was used to provide an understanding of how study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women are viewed by the individual woman and by program staff who develop strategies and tools to assist learning for these adults. Eight formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs participated in semi-structured interviews, and eight program staff participated in a focus group. Data were analyzed using a thematic approach to better describe formerly incarcerated women's study habit challenges in adult education programs. Results indicated that formerly incarcerated women have challenges with studying while addressing both internal and external student challenges. This study may bring about positive social change by creating awareness of needs for formerly incarcerated women related to education, as well as related to overall successful transitioning back to the community.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to everyone who believed in me, cheered me on, and was by my side during what I felt to be my greatest and most difficult moments. Thank you all for being there for me.

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I'd like to thank both Dr. JoAnn McAllister and Dr. Valerie Worthington for their time. I am most grateful to have had the chance to be guided along such a beautiful academic journey with you both.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Incarceration rates for women have risen in recent years, increasing from 26,378 women in 1980 to 222,555 in 2019 (The Sentencing Project, 2020). Sixty percent of incarcerated women are or become mothers and face changes with law enforcement, lengthy sentencing, and unique barriers to their reentry efforts (The Sentencing Project, 2020). Just like men, women face issues with employment, housing, and many other transitional matters when transitioning from prisons back into their communities (Salem et al., 2021). Formerly incarcerated individuals frequently have fewer educational credentials than those who have never been incarcerated (Couloute, 2018). Compared to men, women also have lower rates of high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) attainment, according to Couloute (2018).

This qualitative inquiry describes the study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs in a Middle Atlantic urban region. Insights from this study may provide a better understanding of how supportive learning environments can assist with successful education completion among formerly incarcerated women. Meeting the educational needs of formerly incarcerated women has potential implications for positive social change, as the successful transition back into society can lead to employment, housing, and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to the community.

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the background of the study, the problem statement, and the purpose of the current study. The research questions for the study are

presented with a discussion of the theoretical foundation, the nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, and the scope and delimitations. Additionally, the limitations, significance of the current study, and a summary are presented.

Background

The United States incarcerates over 2 million individuals daily and releases an estimated 600,000 individuals back into communities annually (LaCourse et al., 2019). Although the rate of male imprisonment is still much higher, female imprisonment has increased twice as fast as that of male imprisonment since 1980 (The Sentencing Project, 2019). Half of the women released annually are at high risk for recidivism within their first year of release. An estimated two-thirds who are released are arrested again within the first 3 years of their release (LaCourse et al., 2019). Upon release from imprisonment, women often face influences including, but not limited to, addiction, mental illness, housing issues, transportation issues, family reunification, childcare, parenting, physical health, and employment (National Institute of Justice, 2021).

Researchers have shown that educational prison programs may make a difference in recidivism rates (Bozick et al., 2018; Erickson, 2018; Visher et al. 2017). Education attainment often leads to employment opportunities and recidivism reduction, according to Erickson (2018). Bozick et al. (2018) interpreted data from multiple studies over 37 years to illustrate how helpful education programs are to felons during incarceration and their association with recidivism reduction. Their meta-analysis found that recidivism was reduced by 28 percent when felons participated in educational programs (Bozick et al., 2018). According to their analysis, these studies focused on male populations, as

female felon data could not be collected due to significant inconsistencies in data reporting. Since prison populations within the United States are predominantly male, it is not surprising that most research focuses on males, and that existing prison programs and post-release environments often ignore women and the unique risks they face (Tietjen et al., 2018). Tietjen et al. (2018) suggested that the lack of specific programs for female felons and a lack of research on programs for women can potentially cause them to be unprepared for reentry into the community.

Incarceration potentially influences everything, including relationships with partners and children, college admission, employment opportunities, and even housing options (Ellis, 2021). Binda et al. (2020) recognized that higher education opportunities could positively impact those in prison and sought the experiences of formerly incarcerated males who participated in higher education programs when incarcerated. Other researchers have taken a deeper dive into the dynamics of higher education prison programs to understand better the influence of these programs on formerly incarcerated men (Key & May, 2019).

Some programs support male offenders in successfully transitioning from incarceration back to communities. Berghuis (2018) measures recidivism reduction by reviewing the effectiveness of nine different reentry programs that varied in support for male-only participants across the United States. Despite finding a lack of recidivism among participants, the study suggests that reentry programs need help to improve male ex-offender lifestyles and recidivism reduction (Berghuis, 2018). There are, however, limited resources available for education for female felons that were linked to the process

of reducing recidivism (Gobell et al., 2016) but have not contributed to reducing recidivism.

Significant challenges prevent formerly incarcerated women from obtaining education, including a lack of supportive learning environments in prison programs, especially regarding fundamental study habits that encourage educational success (Baranger et al., 2018). Education reform has been ignored on both a state and national level for formerly incarcerated individuals as incarceration and extreme sentencing policies have been promoted over education attainment (Baranger et al., 2018). A literature review revealed a lack of research on supportive learning environments in adult education programs for formerly incarcerated women (Fizer, 2019). Ositelu (2019) found that most larger colleges don't offer support programs dedicated to formerly incarcerated students compared to local community college environments. Furthermore, community colleges with supportive learning environments have found that tutoring services, mentoring groups, and student advising seem to be essential factors in supporting formerly incarcerated students with their academic goals (Yucel & Ortega, 2021).

While these studies point to the lack of research on incarcerated women and recidivism in general, Miller et al. (2019) specified that release from prison and its relationship with recidivism are still understudied for female felons. Miller et al. (2019) contend that policymakers should consider gender when designing education resources for released felon populations. The population of incarcerated women continues to grow, but there is still little to no specific information on women and reentry programs. Thus, a better understanding of re-entry efforts, education attainment barriers for formerly

incarcerated women, adult education programs, adult learning challenges, teaching methods for adult learners, and potential educational recommendations are needed for programs that assist in developing effective strategies for formerly incarcerated women.

Problem Statement

Formerly incarcerated individuals, especially women, must be provided with resources that support learning so they can succeed in educational endeavors (Baranger et al., 2018). Although they are limited, some studies confirm that social and economic empowerment among formerly incarcerated women is related to access to educational opportunities (Ryder, 2020). Most postsecondary education research is focused on men who have been or are currently incarcerated (Baranger et al., 2018). More attention on formerly incarcerated women is needed as the rate of incarceration of women within the United States has grown over 834% within the last 40 years, which is a significant increase compared to men (Sawyer, 2018).

An essential skill in educational attainment is studying (Bartolome & Kassim, 2019). Digal and Walag (2019) argued that students with ineffective study habits have higher test anxiety and poorer test performance. Furthermore, Digal and Walag (2019) also argued that teaching strategies play a significant role in supporting effective study habits, especially in the classroom setting. However, there appears to be a need for teaching fundamental study habits and creating supportive learning environments within adult education programs for formerly incarcerated women (Baranger et al., 2018). Although researchers have investigated issues related to incarceration and education, there is not much research on study habits being taught to incarcerated individuals

(Baranger et al., 2018). Ellis (2021) described contact with formerly incarcerated women as being a challenge since it is a hard-to-understand population of individuals. Thus, not much is known about the challenges formerly incarcerated women face in developing good study habits.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry study was to describe study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs in a Middle Atlantic urban region. Adult education programs have been selected as the focus because research demonstrates that participation in further education can influence behavior (Bozick et al., 2018). Whereas education programs could be offered to individuals while incarcerated (Sokoloff & Schenck-Fontaine, 2017), the focus of this study is on post-release programs. A further aim is to develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. Assisting women with completing education could also lead to jobs that better the lives of formerly incarcerated women and help them overcome the stigma associated with being formerly incarcerated.

Research Questions

The questions guiding this qualitative study included the following:

RQ1: How do formerly incarcerated women describe their study habit challenges in adult education programs?

RQ2: What study habit strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women?

Theoretical Foundation for the Study

The theory used for this generic qualitative inquiry study is the theory of andragogy developed by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles, 1980). Knowles' theory of andragogy is based on the idea that adults learn differently than children. The theory of andragogy acknowledges that adult learning should be taught using different methods than those often used with children, such as rote memorization and testing (Knowles, 1980). Using the theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) provides a lens to help explore how study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women are viewed by the individual woman and by program staff who develop strategies and tools to assist learning for these adults. Using the theory of andragogy as a framework for this qualitative study may add to previous research aligned with the current research questions of the study. A more in-depth explanation of the theory of andragogy is provided in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative design was selected to allow me to explore the real-world experiences (Creswell, 2014) of the study participants. While a quantitative study may contribute important information about the effectiveness of specific adult education programs, a qualitative study may reveal the challenges of study habits for formerly incarcerated women and the role of supportive learning environments in creating successful education attainment. Additionally, qualitative research lends itself to an understanding of the meaning and the context that may influence participants (Maxwell, 1996). These insights cannot be easily measured using a quantitative study, as formerly incarcerated women and adult education program staff will be conceptualized. The

qualitative approach will allow participants to describe their study habit challenges rather than providing a product that the quantitative approach offers. Various qualitative methods, such as case studies, phenomenology, and ethnography, were also considered but were not selected as the focus of this qualitative study. Case studies focus on a specific program, event, or individual (Merriam, 1998), while this qualitative study focused on the study habits of available formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs. A phenomenological approach presents a phenomenon shared among individuals, and an ethnomethodology study concentrates on culture and human society (Merriam, 1998). This current study did not use a phenomenological approach as the participants did not describe their lived experiences but described everyday experiences (Muzari et al., 2022). Ultimately, a generic qualitative approach was selected as the most appropriate for this study, as it helped reveal how individuals make sense of their experiences (Patton, 2015).

The generic qualitative approach “involves skillfully asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings to solve problems, improve programs, or develop policy” (Patton, 2015, p. 154). Patton states that there will always be challenges with studying human beings, but there will also be suitable individuals to observe what is happening in human settings and programs (Patton, 2015). The generic qualitative approach allowed me to point out the recurrences of a particular pattern to support the theoretical framework (Merriam, 1998). A generic qualitative study allowed for understanding the study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs.

For this study, the primary data source was interviews with 8-10 formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs, and focus groups with 6-8 program staff working within adult education programs. The use of semistructured interviews allowed participants to describe their experiences. Probing questions were as needed to help me understand participant experiences further. Using focus groups with program staff allowed for feedback on study habits within adult education programs. A thematic analysis was used to identify meaningful themes responsive to the research question (Patton, 2015). According to Patton (2015), themes drawn from a qualitative inquiry include unique case orientation and voice, perspective, and reflexivity analysis strategies. The specific generic qualitative approach used in this study was modeled on Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis (2006). This thematic analysis allowed the recursive process to be applied when exploring data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Definitions

Several key terms were used throughout the study. These key terms are defined within this section:

Adult Education Programs: A variety of formal and informal learning approaches, including development that allows for enrichment and improvement of qualifications personally and professionally (Curkovic et al., 2022).

Adult Learning: Owusu-Agyeman (2019) defined adult learning as how adults obtain education through formal and non-formal methods.

Educational Attainment: An individual's highest education levels (U. S. Census Bureau, 2021); often compared with others by gender, race, age, etc. (Duke, 2018).

Formerly Incarcerated: Baranger et al. (2018) defined formerly incarcerated as individuals who have returned to prior social relationships, including family and friends, after being released from prison.

Supportive Learning Environments: To foster a healthy learning context while including but not limited to tutoring, teaching assistants, and collaborative study hall sessions (Baranger et al., 2018).

Program Staff: Individuals employed to provide educational services (Baranger et al., 2018).

Recidivism: When previously convicted individuals have committed other criminal behavior after receiving sanction or intervention from previous crimes (Duke, 2018).

Assumptions

The four philosophical assumptions that help ground qualitative research studies are ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodological assumptions (Creswell, 2009). Philosophical assumptions within qualitative studies are the thoughts of specific individuals (Creswell, 2009). Philosophical assumptions acknowledge participant experiences and beliefs, use primary resources, help to consider future society needs, and adhere to inductive and grounded reasoning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, philosophical assumptions allow a researcher to inform the reader of the possible human differences as those differences could potentially be applied to different realities of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ontology is a concept about the nature of reality (Scotland, 2012). From a qualitative research perspective, ontology highlights that individuals view the world differently (Scotland, 2012). As this qualitative study focused on increasing understanding of study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women, the ontological assumption is that each of the formerly incarcerated women will perceive study habit challenges differently. Epistemology is the concept that each person may have different sources of knowledge and ideas about what is true (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The epistemological assumption in this qualitative research study is that while I know about study habit challenges, participant responses will provide unique details from their perspectives. Participants have ideas of what is true, and this needs to be considered while interviewing and analyzing the interview responses. Interview questions, along with interview probes, can potentially provide insight to validate the different realities voiced among participants. Participants can also validate information using focus groups. Providing program staff with the opportunity to share opinions of their feedback on study habits.

Axiology is about the researcher's and the participants' values and how they may influence the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this qualitative research study, I valued honesty among the participants as it helps guide the results of this study while still understanding that individuals may have different values. Methodological assumptions are related to the specific research approach and analysis of data (Scotland, 2012). This qualitative research study's methodological assumptions guide the implementation of addressing the research problem. The generic qualitative research approach allowed for

focusing on what I wanted to achieve versus other methodologies that focus on the process (Williams Woolley, 2009). These will become evident as the research design is described in detail in Chapter 3.

Scope and Delimitations

The qualitative inquiry design was selected to explore the study habit challenges of adult education programs among formerly incarcerated women. The generic qualitative inquiry design is a powerful qualitative tool that assists with grounding theory inductively generated from actual world fieldwork instead of being produced within a laboratory or academic setting (Patton, 2015). The scope of this study was limited to formerly incarcerated women who were enrolled in adult education programs at the time of their participation in the study. Furthermore, adult education program staff are also participants in the current study. These participants were selected based on specific criteria, and access to participants was facilitated by contact with specific adult education programs. The results from this study are not designed to be utilized with other populations beyond the selected scope but could potentially support future research studies.

Delimitations included that currently incarcerated individuals were excluded from the current study as it may be challenging to access that population of individuals. Formerly incarcerated males were also excluded from the present study as it seems that prior research focuses mainly on the male population versus the female population. Additional delimitations included the selection of the theoretical framework. The transformative learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow was considered during the

selection of theoretical frameworks to apply since this theory focuses on the idea that adult learners can learn new information based on adjustments (Mezirow, 1978). It was determined that transformative learning theory would not be used since program staff participants would not be guaranteed to apply learning contracts, group projects, role-playing, case studies, and simulations consistent with the theory (Mezirow, 1978). There is potential transferability related to different populations and educational groups, such as higher education and specific general education programs for adults. Furthermore, the study procedures could be applied to young adults and adolescents. Different regions within the United States and international areas could potentially be studied from this perspective.

Limitations

A challenging limitation within this generic qualitative study involves the lack of prior research on formerly incarcerated individuals' barriers to education access within adult education programs designed explicitly for formerly incarcerated women. Despite the lack of previous preliminary research, some dependability issues may exist in the current qualitative research design. The option to comprehensively conduct interviews and focus groups virtually was made available. As a result of these limitations, data obtained from interviews with formerly incarcerated women and program staff focus groups within adult education programs must not be generalized to all incarcerated women and program staff. The results of this current qualitative study can be generalized only to the study participants because of the selected study design and theoretical framework.

Limitations of the study related to this generic qualitative inquiry exist regarding trustworthiness. Trustworthiness references the integrity in collecting data, the interpretation of the data, and the ability to ensure that the study method is rigorously implemented (Connelly, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined dependability and transferability as criteria for trustworthiness for qualitative researchers. Dependability refers to the consistency of data over time within a study regardless of the condition of the environment (Connelly, 2016). To ensure dependability within this qualitative study, an audit trail of all participant data was securely kept. Transferability is the extent to which meaningful study findings can be applied to other people within different settings (Connelly, 2016). I attempted to ensure transferability within this current qualitative study by presenting a clear picture of study habit challenges that formerly incarcerated women share to inform others and resonate with the study audience. This qualitative study focused on sharing the participants' stories rather than generalizing them for all formerly incarcerated women.

Biases could potentially influence the results of this qualitative study. Formerly incarcerated women could be biased toward being open with the researcher about their study habit challenges, which could negatively impact exploring their experiences and barriers to study habits in adult education programs. My previous knowledge and work experience could also potentially cause bias. My experience in recruitment and human resources may cause me to have assumptions about the character of formerly incarcerated women and program staff within adult education programs. These limits could result in a lack of in-depth details, limiting the study's value (Creswell, 2013).

Measures to Address Limitations

In attempting to mitigate any weaknesses of the interview process of the study, detailed instructions for all participants were strictly enforced. Each formerly incarcerated woman and adult education program staff member was provided detailed instructions. These included but were not limited to understanding that they could withdraw from the study at any given time. Additionally, the interview questions were the same for formerly incarcerated women, as will the focus group questions for program staff within adult education programs. Furthermore, no limitations were present regarding construct validity as this current qualitative study did not use any scales or test measurements to gather data. Data were strictly collected with the use of interviews and focus group discussions.

Significance

This qualitative study is significant because it may contribute meaningful knowledge toward increasing educational attainment among formerly incarcerated women using adult education programs. There is an expectation that formerly incarcerated individuals will re-enter society and not recidivate, which justifies the need for more effective educational resources for formerly incarcerated women (Sugie, 2018). This study is unique as it addresses study habit challenges among a participant group that is sparsely studied (Baranger et al., 2018).

Another potential contribution of this study is to develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further the educational attainment of formerly incarcerated women. Furthermore, adult education

programs can potentially address the study skill challenges of formerly incarcerated women by establishing supportive learning environments for them. Supportive learning environments can benefit previously incarcerated women by enabling them to take advantage of higher educational opportunities (Baranger et al., 2018).

This generic qualitative study may have implications for positive social change among individuals and educational programs at multiple societal levels. Individuals may find and engage in discussion and practice within business and academic settings to identify educational gaps that can be adjusted for student success. Professionals in educational settings may become more aware of the importance of teaching and engaging strong study habit skills to maintain supportive learning environments. This study's results could lead to positive social change. The development and broader use of adult education resources may also speak to issues related to reducing poverty, unemployment, hunger, housing problems, and formerly incarcerated women's health issues. This current study may promote these outcomes through necessary training and individual and team meetings.

Summary

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background of the issues of formerly incarcerated women. It also included the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. This study examines formerly incarcerated women's reentry obstacles, particularly their educational challenges. Although researchers have investigated incarcerated individuals

and education, little is known about the study habits of formerly incarcerated women and the perspective on this of adult education program staff members. This study used a generic qualitative inquiry research design with formerly incarcerated women experiencing study habit challenges while enrolled in adult education programs and program staff within adult education programs as participants. The study's theoretical framework includes the theory of andragogy developed by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles, 1980). This study's results may offer insight into educational recommendations that promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women.

Chapter 2 describes the strategy for identifying related research and the theoretical framework for the study, and potential educational recommendations are also discussed. The literature review focuses on research related to the challenges for formerly incarcerated women, especially on re-entry and education attainment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Significant challenges prevent formerly incarcerated women from obtaining an education to support their return to society (Ahmed et al., 2019). Some research has found that post-release education programs lack supportive learning environments, especially support for learning fundamental study habits that encourage educational success (Baranger et al., 2018). For example, the apparent lack of teaching essential study habits and creating supportive learning environments within adult education programs for formerly incarcerated women (Baranger et al., 2018) contributes to collateral consequences such as housing and employment restrictions (Williams et al., 2019).

Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs in a Middle Atlantic urban region. A further aim was to develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. This chapter begins with the literature search strategy that was used to identify relevant prior research, followed by a discussion of the theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1980), which is the theoretical framework that grounds this study. The literature review then explores the history of incarceration, education, re-entry, and study habits.

Literature Review Strategy

An extensive review was conducted of literature published within the last 5 years to provide an overview and complete understanding of each topic in this dissertation. The

databases used for this literature review were Academic Search Complete, Education Source, SAGE Journals, formerly SAGE Premier, NCES Publications, Psyc Info, Soc INDEX with full text, PowerSearch, EBSCOhost, Academic Video Online (AVON), ProQuest, Taylor & Francis Online, SocINDEX, and PsycARTICLES. The resources for this literature review were also gathered using the Walden University online library, Google Scholar, Bureau of Justice, Maryland Correctional Enterprise, National Institute of Justice, Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, the United States Sentencing Commission, and the Sentencing Project. The literature review was conducted based on keyword searches, including *formerly incarcerated women and study habit challenges within adult education programs, gender in prison rates, gender gaps in ex-offender programs, education resources for offenders and ex-offenders, and program staff teaching methods for study habits*. Additional keyword search terms included *theory of andragogy, adult education program success and challenges, teaching methods and adult learning, supportive learning environments, educational recommendations, and education and offenders*.

I selected articles based on their content to address the current study's research problem, purpose, contribution toward filling the gap in the existing literature, and research questions. I found little recent research and only a few dissertations specific to formerly incarcerated female participation groups throughout my literature review. Much of the research I discovered was dedicated to male or mixed-gender groups with more men than women. To provide a comprehensive and current literature review that established relevance to the present study, I obtained over 200 different sources through

the Walden University online library, Google Scholar, and various government and nonprofit organizations. All sources used in the literature review were government publications, related organizational websites, or peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles and books. Journal articles and books focused on female offenders took precedence over all-male offender studies. However, those journal articles and books that focused on men were not eliminated, as those study methodologies had factors of transferability and dependability.

Theoretical Framework

This generic qualitative inquiry explored study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs. A further aim was to develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. The literature review contained the theoretical framework of this qualitative generic inquiry study: Malcolm Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy. This theory provided the foundation for the research design, shaped the primary and secondary research questions, and guided data analysis.

Andragogy was first named in 1833 by German teacher Alexander Kapp (Loeng, 2018). Kapp's efforts to develop andragogy were not strong enough to be accepted and used among other researchers, so the term was not used during this period (Loeng, 2018). In 1927, Martha Anderson and Eduard Linderman re-introduced andragogy in the United States. They continued the development of this theory to spotlight the ability of self-directed and problem-solving approaches within adult education (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000). Malcolm Knowles was introduced to andragogy in the mid-1960s. He

developed the theory that andragogy is parallel to pedagogy and focuses on the characteristics of adult learners and the teacher's role (Knowles, 1980).

Before the theory of andragogy was developed, the foundation of pedagogy was first established through monks teaching essential reading and writing skills to young children (Knowles, 1980). After World War II, pedagogical practices continued to be applied in classrooms for children and adult learning environments (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000). In the 1920s, adult education continued with this systematic approach of pedagogical teachings, causing difficulty in the classroom, specifically for adult learners, which did not go unnoticed by educators (Knowles, 1980). Educators recognized higher dropout rates for adult education as pedagogy supported “fact-laden lectures, assigned readings, drills, quizzes, rote memorizing, and examinations” (Knowles, 1980, p. 40). Over time, educators documented their observations, which were reviewed towards the mid-1960s.

Knowles continued to develop the theory of andragogy through the mid-sixties, creating five foundational assumptions associated with adult learning (El-Amin, 2020). The assumptions of andragogy appeared designed to contribute “recommendations concerning planning, directing, and evaluating adults' learning” (Loeng, 2018, p. 4). Knowles (1980) established four andragogy assumptions for maturing individuals:

- Self-concept: Adults' self-concept develops from dependent toward self-directed;
- Adult Learner Experience: Adults accumulate a growing reservoir of experiences that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning;

- Readiness to Learn: Adults' readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of their social roles; and
- Orientation to Learning: Adults' time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts from subject-centeredness to performance-centeredness.

Later, Knowles added the fifth assumption, motivation to learn: "As a person matures, the motivation to learn is internal" (Loeng, 2018).

The theory of andragogy highlights the process for adult learners to take responsibility for themselves during their learning journey (El-Amin, 2020). Progressing from a dependent human to a self-directed human could potentially occur when adults make their own decisions to accept any associated consequences to continue to navigate their lives, which describes the self-concept assumption (Knowles, 1980). This assumption relates to the current study as formerly incarcerated women are enrolled in adult education programs. Despite previous life choices, they are currently making better choices by furthering their education.

The adult learner experience assumption acknowledges that adults display their knowledge based on what they have done, such as their previous education, employment, training, traveling, and achievements (Knowles, 1980). As Knowles (1980) described, children do not offer this since their experiences are based on external sources related to their family, where they live, and attend school. This assumption may support identifying themes related to study habit challenges enrolled in adult education programs. The

readiness to learn assumption is based on learning new tasks. A sequence of steps should happen before a new task is learned (Knowles, 1980). For example, when students are tasked with working in groups decided among themselves, getting to know other students first takes time before group members are comfortable working together (Knowles, 1980).

The fourth assumption is the orientation to learning (Knowles, 1980). The orientation to learning assumption suggests that adults view education attainment as a method to overcome and improve their current life situations. At the same time, children do not typically hold the same values for education as they think of their futures broadly (Knowles, 1980). This assumption may assist in identifying participants' views of education attainment to improve their situation. The fifth assumption includes motivation to learn (Knowles, 1984) and may highlight participants' feelings of satisfaction and increased self-esteem associated with motivation (Knowles, 1984). Although this qualitative study will not focus on motivation, participants' positive and negative feelings may be documented.

Andragogy is applied in numerous current studies that address the challenges and development of effective improvement plans throughout classrooms for adults worldwide (Ajayi, 2019; Anderson & Boutelier, 2021; Morrison et al., 2019). Ajayi (2019) argues that adults have a wide variety of experiences and background knowledge that help them learn. Using the theory of andragogy to explore adult learners in Nigeria, researchers documented that learning is successful if teaching methods are creative and consider students' prior backgrounds (Ajayi, 2019). Morrison et al. (2019) explored volunteers'

perceptions of organizational training efforts to increase needed social change among communities. Findings showed that volunteers had a sense of independently exploring their learning paths during training sessions and applying past experiences to understand and approach new challenges (Morrison et al., 2019). With these different educational approaches, driven by andragogy theory, the intent is for adults to learn new topics quickly and on their own terms. This current qualitative inquiry study, like those of Ajayi (2019) and Morrison et al. (2019), may offer educational recommendations that could include changing the method of teaching to put the terms of learning on the student and not the instructor or provide multiple approaches for students based on learning preference.

An international example of using different education approaches is illustrated by the South African government's experience with poverty and unemployment due to the increase of adults without education despite the country's 1994 independence from years of apartheid (Akintolu & Letseka, 2021). Throughout the United States, school districts and state departments rely heavily on educator preparation programs to address the lingering issues of teacher shortages and retention (Anderson & Boutelier, 2021). Even within US cities, undergraduate college professors are challenged with teaching adult learners and traditional students in the same context (Bengo, 2020). The South African government realized that methods of andragogy should be applied in classrooms through improved curriculum, teaching methods, and on the basis of practical feedback from adult learners (Akintolu & Letseka, 2021). Anderson and Boutelier (2021) and Bengo (2020) improved learning environments using andragogy methods. Anderson and Boutelier

(2021) noticed that teacher preparation students learned effectively but could potentially increase effectiveness if teacher preparation programs used andragogy teaching strategies. Bengo (2020) found that adult learners are successful when professors apply interactive discussion strategies to classrooms containing a mix of adult learners and traditional students. These studies show positive directions for addressing adult learning challenges with improved classroom adjustments that address adult learner needs.

The theory of andragogy shapes the current qualitative research by predicting and explaining study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs. This could lead to recommendations that use andragogy assumptions to encourage the self-directing adult learner. Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy may contribute to our understanding of how educational programs could provide support for the development of effective study habits among formerly incarcerated women since traditional teaching methods may not be as effective compared to other student populations. The current research questions help build upon the existing theory of andragogy by acknowledging that supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women should exist.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

A thorough literature review will provide significant support necessary to answer the current qualitative study research questions. To adequately address the research questions, several topics need to be discussed logically to prove that formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs have study habit challenges. The literature review addressed critical issues related to the history of incarceration and

education, re-entry, and study habits. Lastly, this literature review provided practical educational recommendations for adult education classrooms.

The History of Incarceration and Education

Education attainment in the United States varies among different populations. In 2019, approximately 28% of the United States population aged 25 years of age and older had at least some form of high school education, while about 22% of the same United States population held at least a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). However, no recent statistical data has been released on those incarcerated and their educational attainment rates. Still, researchers have acknowledged that those who have been incarcerated tend to have lower academic levels than the general United States population (Duke, 2018). Additional research conducted by the National Institute of Justice (2020) determined that those enrolled in educational programs during incarceration are less likely to recidivate than the potential 76.6% of released inmates who return to imprisonment within a 5-year release period.

Funding has also been blamed for low enrollment of incarcerated populations in educational programs. With the introduction of the Pell Grant program in 1972, many correctional education programs became widespread, especially throughout the United States (Kallman, 2019). The Pell Grant program started with only 12 available prison college programs across the United States in 1965 to over 700 different college programs within prisons in the 1990s (Kallman, 2019). Unfortunately, the Pell Grant program's efforts abruptly ended for those incarcerated in 1993 due to prison reform acts implemented to end funding (Kallman, 2019). During the Clinton Administration, the

United States Congress passed the 1993 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1994 (Mallory, 2015). Both acts subsequently ended the 30 years of educational opportunities to the incarcerated with the help of Pell Grants (Mallory, 2015). However, the Obama Administration allowed the Second Chance Pell pilot in 2015, allowing eligible inmates to participate in higher education efforts using federal Pell Grant funds (The Washington State Department of Corrections, 2018).

The Second Chance Pell pilot is still being used today. This pilot allows selected state and federal prisons to offer Pell Grant funding to incarcerated students who need the funds to attend postsecondary courses (Chesnut & Wachendorfer, 2021). Early in the pilot, only 67 colleges in the United States participated, but today, about 130 colleges participate (Chesnut & Wachendorfer, 2021). Most recently, the United States Department of Education decided to extend the program pilot for the 2022-2023 award year, allowing thousands of incarcerated students to continue their education (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Having the opportunity to take postsecondary courses could also provide a deeper understanding of program success for incarcerated students. Binder et al. (2020) explored the impact of liberal arts coursework for those enrolled as incarcerated students in the Northeastern portion of the United States. Among those semi-structured interviews, common themes that seemed to point towards program success included discussion-based learning, respectful relationships with college and prison staff, and academic rigor (Binder et al., 2020). Providing postsecondary resources while incarcerated presents its

challenges, especially for those incarcerated. However additional studies have found that offered postsecondary resources while incarcerated are beneficial to incarcerated individuals. Evans et al. (2018) explored how higher educational opportunities played a positive role of motivation and empowerment to those incarcerated. Qualitative interviews indicated that individuals who were incarcerated and enrolled in education programs enjoyed a sense of motivation and empowerment that helped them change negative perspectives of themselves (Evans et al., 2018). These same results also seem to contribute to the idea that incarcerated individuals who have educational opportunities have a better chance to reenter society positively, potentially reducing recidivism rates (Binder et al., 2020).

Advocating for those incarcerated is needed to change the existing educational programs offered. Current research findings are heavily relied on to help identify the necessary change (Ahmed et al., 2019). Frerich and Murphy-Nugen (2019) discovered an opportunity to explore four incarcerated women participating in off-site postsecondary correctional education at local universities or community colleges. The study findings were informative, results displayed participants having a sense of humanity while enrolled in off-site educational opportunities (Frerich & Murphy-Nugen, 2019). A sense of humanity among participants leads to more advocacy towards those incarcerated and their educational needs, especially advocacy towards incarcerated women and addressing correctional policy of education (Frerich & Murphy-Nugen, 2019). Runell (2016) even argued that there was value in incorporating education into prison programs and agreed that more research should be conducted about the experiences of being enrolled in

education programs that support incarcerated individuals instead of improving the curriculum. Education offered to individuals who are incarcerated has also been an important tool to assist with these individuals' reentry efforts (Ahmed et al., 2019).

Re-Entry

After incarceration, formerly incarcerated individuals reenter society, with some eventually returning to prison due to committing new crimes or violations of parole and probation (Anderson et al., 2018). There is no secret about the difficulty of re-entering society for both men and women. Formerly incarcerated individuals are already judged based on their previous criminal activities; other challenges include but are not limited to lack of education and job skills, employment history, access to employment due to location, physical and mental health concerns, and even challenges of substance and alcohol addiction (Anazodo et al., 2019). Challenges to reentry also include the one-size-fits-all mentality, primarily as it deals with gender approaches. It seems inevitable that formerly incarcerated men's experiences are used as the standard for women's reentry despite the lack of knowledge and practice that sets women back compared to men (Wesely & Dewey, 2018).

Pettus-Davis et al., (2018) has argued that there are some gender differences for social support among men and women reentering society. With gender differences, study implications have recommended that reentry programs become gender-specific as reentry needs are different based on gender (Pettus-Davis et al., 2018). McClearen et al. (2021) partnered with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), and both acknowledged that women also require a unique approach to reentry to maximize their success. For example,

formerly incarcerated women have more multi-systemic experiences of trauma and mental illnesses within their life compared to formerly incarcerated men (Gunn, 2021). Furthermore, women are more likely to be the sole and primary caretakers for children upon reentry and often have lower educational backgrounds than formerly incarcerated men (McClearen et al., 2021).

Considering these reentry challenges, Ventura-Miller (2021) recognized that women are most likely open to treatment plans and reentry programs and have lower recidivism rates than men. Recidivism occurs when an individual is reincarcerated for repeating or committing a new crime (Ropes-Berry et al., 2020). In most cases, the success of formerly incarcerated individuals is measured by recidivism (Ropes-Berry et al., 2020). Most recently, recidivism has been cited as potentially successful with education participation while incarcerated (Binder et al., 2019). Educational resources are among the most critical interventions available to formerly incarcerated individuals (Jaggi & Kliewer, 2020).

Study Habits

Study habits are presented in various formats that assist students at any level to achieve academic achievement. Using study habits to achieve academic success requires dependency on a repetitious pattern of behavior and could potentially be challenging to create for learners (Stojanovic et al., 2020). Many educational and psychological research studies have found that students often learn using specific study habit strategies (Rowell et al., 2021). To improve the academic achievement of any student and how students

learn with available learning approaches should be implemented to contribute to the academic program improvement (Faranda et al., 2021).

Study habit strategies involve various creative methods and tactics that strengthen a student's learning ability (Hensley, 2020). Strategies could include active or passive strategies that do not necessarily guarantee success. Active study habit strategies involve using flashcards, practice questions, describing concepts from memory, asking questions to understand further, comparing ideas, and synthesizing resources to organize critical points (Rowell et al., 2021). Passive study habits have fewer benefits for students; however, they are still used today, such as rereading materials and copying information word for word (Rowell et al., 2021).

First-year psychology students had the opportunity to plan study habit strategies to apply to course exams (Rowell et al., 2021). Reflective surveys allowed students to identify active or passive study habit strategies and concluded that methods such as flashcards and practice questions were beneficial overall (Rowell et al., 2021). Additionally, limiting distractions and dedicating time to study was of great use. Stojanovic et al. (2020) also researched university students to show that study habits can improve when students foster repetition with study habit methods. Planning out studying methods seemed to encourage motivation and university student success (Stojanovic et al., 2020). Both Rowel et al. (2020) and Stojanovic et al. (2020) posed study limitations around using only university students as participants, making study results difficult to generalize. Study habit methods that have worked among these selected university

students may not work for all; however, that should not limit using any study habit strategies regardless of the environment or the type of student.

Some researchers have argued that educational programs should be prepared with strategic learning approaches to strengthen study habits. More specifically, educators should not teach students how to pass the test but instead guide students to understand that new concepts are essential and should be applied insightfully and comprehensively (Faranda et al., 2021). Just and Bruner (2020) shaped student success by identifying students' resources. Learning centers have also identified through study diaries, questionnaires, and even interviews what works for students and what does not, which provides an opportunity for educational programs to offer more effective academic resources (Hensley, 2020).

Studying to advance our knowledge is essential to take advantage of, and we often depend on students to learn effectively without showing them how (Walck-Shannon et al., 2021). Hawkins et al. (2021) also agreed that study skills are rarely taught, particularly at university. In an 8-week program conducted by Hawkins et al. (2021), results showed that students provided with time management and study method instructions were better prepared during their first year of biology than students who were not offered the same opportunities. Walck-Shannon et al. (2021) also reviewed how biology students' study and how their study habits relate to test performance. Academic preparation, such as continuous studying habits, was found to improve testing performance (Walck-Shannon et al., 2021). Both studies encouraged enhancing the classroom for student success. Hawkins et al. (2021) saw that it was imperative to

incorporate smaller classroom sizes and provide more welcoming experiences. At the same time, Walck-Shannon et al. (2021) noted that more time in the classroom is needed for students to study, and educators should suggest and show study strategies during classroom time.

The improvement of study habits appeared to be a talking point among the studies identified. Brown-Kramer (2021) stated that most students who enter higher education are not fully prepared as study habits developed in secondary education often do not suffice in college settings. It is noted that students cannot just be told how to study; in fact, habits should be demonstrated using real-world examples of how to study (Fiorella, 2020) effectively. Most recently, the impact of a world pandemic has negatively affected students, causing difficulties with adjusting to a new way of learning and retaining information. (Orhan-Karsak & Yurtcu, 2020).

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review began with the background, development, and understanding of the theory of andragogy and how this theory has been applied to other similar studies most recently. Andragogy has been formally used for improving adult learning while pedagogy practices support classrooms for children (Knowles, 1980). Applying andragogy as the theoretical framework to this qualitative study has shaped the research design about how formerly incarcerated women could improve their study habit skills and potentially pursue educational attainment successfully. This perspective may show how formerly incarcerated individuals need supportive learning environments that allow for the development of independent self-concepts, foster adult learning

experiences, and reinforce previous knowledge and experiences to encourage learning differently (Loeng, 2018).

The literature review took a historical perspective on incarceration and education, focusing on the political aspects and impacts that have left challenging circumstances for formerly incarcerated individuals to figure out for themselves. Government policies that often justify education attainment for formerly incarcerated individuals have been implemented and changed dramatically over the decades. The literature also revealed the turbulence related to re-entry for formerly incarcerated individuals and studying habits that existed. Adding education attainment on top of re-entering society creates more pressure (Stojanovic et al., 2020), especially for formerly incarcerated individuals despite what study habits techniques that students seem to be comfortable with using. Providing multiple ways to learn in a supportive environment should be encouraged (Stojanovic et al., 2020).

It is essential to address the gap in the research literature regarding the significant challenges preventing formerly incarcerated women from obtaining education, which include a lack of supportive learning environments in programs, especially fundamental study habits that encourage educational success (Baranger et al., 2018). In this qualitative inquiry study, the focus is on the study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated individuals. It is important to explore the policy involved around those incarcerated and their access to educational opportunities to understand better how formerly incarcerated individuals currently navigate. It will intend that the results of this current study provide educational recommendations that could potentially enhance current studying habits for

formerly incarcerated individuals enrolled in adult education programs. Chapter 3 describes the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. Chapter 3 will further describe the participant selection logic, instrumentation, published data collection instruments, research developed instruments, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, a data analysis plan, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry study was to describe study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs. This study's results may provide insight into the challenges that formerly incarcerated women face and the study habit strategies adult education program staff perceive create supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women. The findings may also contribute to the development of educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women.

Chapter 3 consists of the research design and rationale, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. Additional sections include the participation selection, instrumentation, researcher-developed instruments, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, data analysis plan, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, informed consent confidentiality, and data storage are also summarized.

Research Design

The research questions were developed to help me learn about the study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs and to explore study habit strategies that program staff perceive to create supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do formerly incarcerated women describe their study habit challenges in adult education programs?

RQ2: What study habit strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women?

A qualitative design was selected for this study to allow me to describe the experiences (Creswell, 2015) of formerly incarcerated women and program staff within adult education programs. While a quantitative study may contribute important information about the effectiveness of adult education programs, a qualitative study can reveal the challenges and perceptions of participants within adult education programs. These insights cannot be easily measured using a quantitative study as formerly incarcerated women and program staff within adult education programs' experiences were conceptualized.

A generic qualitative inquiry would help explore how individuals make sense of their experiences (Patton, 2015). Other qualitative methods, such as a case study and ethnography, were considered. A case study was not selected as this current study will not study a specific adult education program (Creswell, 2013). The ethnography method was not chosen as the culture of the participant group will not be studied (Creswell, 2013). The generic qualitative approach "involves skillfully asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings to solve problems, improve programs, or develop policy" (Patton, 2015, p. 154). While Patton states that there will always be challenges with studying human beings, there will also be suitable outlooks to observe what is happening in human settings and programs.

Thus, a generic qualitative approach was selected as the best fit. The specific approach was the model developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), as it includes a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is defined as recognizing and evaluating similar information within found data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Overall, the thematic approach will help to illuminate the study habit challenges and perceptions of study habits that have worked in supportive learning environments. This generic qualitative approach will allow for an understanding of the study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs and the perceptions of program staff within adult education programs of what is needed to create supportive learning environments.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is an essential aspect of qualitative research in general. Researchers are responsible for identifying participants who share similar experiences and may have had different outcomes and opinions about that same experience (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The qualitative inquiry approach requires the focus on actual experiences and the content of that individual's experience and opinions of selected participants, while the collection of data is typically gained by interviewing participants (Percy et al., 2015).

As the researcher of the current study, I maintained the observer role. I took note of all interviews and focus group interactions of those who have volunteered their time to participate in this current study. Local adult education programs have established professional relationships to gain access to participants, but no personal relationships existed. Participation was solely based on volunteers. At any given time, any participant

could withdraw their participation from the current study. To maintain fairness and avoid any issues of conflict or power of control over any participant within the present study, as the researcher, I've defined my research questions before the start of the study. I also mapped out specific interview and focus group questions to utilize for each participant group. Formerly incarcerated women and program staff of adult education programs would have their own set of questions to better understand the established research questions of the current study. Recording interviews with formerly incarcerated women and program staff focus group sessions helped ensure that all details provided during the engagements were not altered by any means. I reviewed those interviews and focus group sessions to maintain data consistency across the entire research study.

As the researcher of this current study, I upheld ethical standards for all methods throughout the research and followed established guidelines in participants' informed consent. It would be important that the researcher avoid harm and provide valid and truthful information to participants (Lasser & Gottlieb, 2016). Often, gaining access, negotiating time, privacy for recording data, handling any issues that may arise, and participants being reluctant to provide detailed feedback would become barriers to obtaining valuable and adequate data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Due to these barriers, part of my role was to deal with and solve those issues professionally.

Data from the interview promoted meaningful contributions that increased the utility of the study (Levitt et al., 2017), especially as I was seeking to promote social change. In any study, the researcher needs to set aside any thoughts and opinions that could interfere with or falsely guide the data collected (Levitt et al., 2017). Furthermore,

as the researcher of the current study, I was responsible for providing all details that I bring to the research study, specifically details related to bias awareness, values, experiences, and professional and personal relationships (Creswell, 2013). Within this generic qualitative inquiry study, bracketing was implemented from the beginning of the research and used throughout to reduce and even eliminate biased data, as recommended by Wadams and Park (2018).

Methodology

A population represents the number of people with specific characteristics of study interest, while a sample adheres to the subset of the population (American Psychology Association, 2020). Participants in this study were formerly incarcerated women. The sample was drawn from the larger population of formerly incarcerated individuals located within the Middle Atlantic region of the United States. The incarceration rate last calculated in 2018 for women has averaged 656 per 100,000 women within the Middle Atlantic region (Kajstura, 2018).

A convenience sampling method, also known as volunteer sampling (Gill, 2020), assisted in recruiting individual participants. Convenience sampling is defined as the nonrandom and nonprobability sampling of participants within a specific target population, as these participants are easily accessible based on location and availability during the qualitative inquiry study (Etikan et al., 2016). The convenience sampling method seeks volunteers to add value to the research study by providing information on research questions set by the study (Gill, 2020). This method is valuable to this qualitative inquiry study as it allowed participants to be voluntary throughout the study.

Although the convenience sampling method was used, it does not imply that the results found should be applied to an entire population (Etikan et al., 2016).

The inclusion criteria for the study were women who were formerly incarcerated, are enrolled in an adult education program, and have experiences related to study habit challenges. The inclusion criteria for program staff participants included participants employed by adult education programs and should be in classroom environments with students who may identify as formerly incarcerated. No criteria were established regarding age, race, marital status, and religious preferences. However, this information was collected to understand the participant population better. Individuals who met these criteria but missed three or more attempts to schedule interviews or attend a scheduled interview or focus group session were excluded from research participation. Some individuals who met the inclusion criteria may be ineligible for other reasons. Exclusion criteria might include health or medication issues. For this study, these issues would include participants who are difficult to make contact with at any point of the study and participants who miss scheduled interviews or focus group session appointments to collect data. Salkind (2010) notes that when such individuals do not withdraw themselves voluntarily, they should be excluded to avoid impacting essential perspectives of the study.

Participants were recruited through purposeful sampling, a model that allows for intentional location, documents, and selections of participants by a researcher to obtain rich ideas (Staller, 2021). The sample included 8-10 formerly incarcerated women currently enrolled in adult education programs, and 6-8 program staff presently employed

within adult education programs. The participant sample size of 8-10 for the individual interviews is, according to Weller et al. (2018), an appropriate sample size. Boddy (2016) also suggests that larger participant sample sizes could be unrealistic to analyze as qualitative research requires intensive work.

Saturation is a point in data collection when data become redundant rather than producing new information (Guest, 2020). The redundancy during the data collection process equates to the researcher ending the data collection process (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). Furthermore, saturation helps confirm that enough data are collected to be acceptable to the qualitative research (Alam, 2021). The larger the participant samples are within a qualitative study, the less value they contribute to the qualitative research, according to Weller et al. (2016). This current study limits the sample size, using 8-10 formerly incarcerated women and 6-8 program staff participants, unless it is determined that saturation has not been achieved. Reviewing and analyzing each interview and focus group session once concluded will assist with observing if there is redundancy among themes and categories of the data.

Instrumentation

This generic qualitative study will use semistructured, open-ended questions that include probes. Research questions and interview questions for this study are designed to collect study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women and the study habit strategies that program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments. The literature review shapes the research questions of this generic qualitative study, and this study focuses on an underrepresented group of individuals in current research. Focusing

on women rather than men and a mixed group of participants makes for a unique study.

The gap in the literature found through the literature review focused the study to explore the lack of fundamental study habits being taught to incarcerated individuals (Baranger et al., 2018). The theoretical framework, Knowles' theory of andragogy, has also shaped the research questions and will assist with understanding the challenges of developing self-directed learning skills. Understanding how the needs of participants who face study habit challenges allows a connection to be made from the current study to any previous knowledge.

To ensure that content validity is established in this current qualitative study, all responses provided were recorded and displayed in the study results. Specific questions were set for each set of participant groups to attempt to answer the study's research questions. As the researcher of this current study, I ensured consistency in all data collection and analysis throughout the study. Furthermore, attempting to obtain the needed 8-10 formerly incarcerated women and 6-8 program staff participants within adult education programs helped contribute to the established sufficiency of data collection to answer the study's research questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Qualitative research requires social interactions, good relationships, strong interpersonal skills, and researcher and community networks (Roger et al., 2018).

Recruitment procedures will involve soliciting volunteers through local adult education programs in the Middle Atlantic region of the United States. Participants will include 8-

10 formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs and 6-8 program staff currently employed by adult education programs.

Local adult education programs will be contacted and informed that this current study is strictly an academic research study. Successful strategies to contact potential participants will include flexible schedules for virtual video interviews and focus group sessions with email follow-ups to confirm interview and focus group session meeting times. All volunteers will be asked to complete a consent form before participating in the study. According to Creswell (2013), consent forms are written forms of communication that inform a participant of the purpose of the study and responsibilities of the participant and, of course, are required by the IRB. Upon approval, participants will be recruited using an email blast. Those formerly incarcerated women volunteer that express interest and provide their consent form will be contacted by phone to schedule a virtual video interview appointment at a mutually agreed time. An email will be used to follow up with the participant to confirm interview meeting times in writing. For focus group sessions, all program staff volunteers will be given the choice of two dates and times to participate in the session and an email follow up will be sent once program staff volunteers confirm their session date and time. All volunteers will be informed and reminded throughout the study that they are volunteers and can end at any time.

Data will be collected using interviews with formerly incarcerated women and program staff focus group sessions within adult education programs. I will be responsible for collecting the data obtained from the interviews and focus group sessions. I anticipate conducting one interview per participant, utilizing 1 hour of each participant's time. For

focus group sessions, two 1-hour sessions will be hosted with program staff volunteers. While face-to-face interviews and focus group sessions are preferred; virtual video interviews and focus group sessions using Zoom will be conducted since COVID19 has necessitated such precautions during the time of this study. The Zoom virtual video interviews and focus group sessions will be recorded. The Zoom software also provides a transcript of the virtual video interviews, and these will be saved as WORD documents and used for data analysis and to ensure accuracy through auditing all data. If recruitment results are too few within interviews and focus group sessions, attempts to contact additional participants will be made to continue interviewing and focus group sessions. In the case of having to engage with another adult education program is impossible; the study will continue with the current participant group. I will note the participant contact challenges and why I decided to continue with data collection in the study.

At the beginning of each interview and focus group session, participants will be reminded of the study's purpose. They will be asked to sign, or to confirm that it has been signed if signature was obtained via email, the Consent Form and to give permission to be recorded before interviews begin. A set of interview questions will be asked, and probing questions will be followed up with, if needed. Throughout the study, participants will be informed of their ability to end their participation at any time. Participation withdrawal will be submitted through writing or verbally as both forms of communication will be accepted and noted. No reason needs to be provided; however, an

explanation may be documented if any participant decides to volunteer that information on their decision.

There will be no follow-up interviews or focus group sessions after initial interviews and focus group sessions with all participants. If requiring additional time to interview participants during initial interviews, I will ask for extra time during the interview or as a follow-up interview suitable to the participant's availability. Upon the conclusion of the interviews, interviews will be transcribed, and a copy of those transcriptions will be provided to each participant that completed an interview. Participants will be asked to review the transcriptions; also known as member-checking, which allows for participants of the study to check for accuracy in their views (Busetto et al., 2020). After obtaining confirmation from participants, the data analysis portion of the study will begin.

Data Analysis Plan

Interview data with the 8-10 formerly incarcerated women will provide information on their study habit challenges in adult education programs. In addition, interview data obtained from 6-8 program staff members will inform the study on what study habits strategies they believe provides supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women. Data from interviews and focus group sessions will be recorded and transcribed using the features of the Zoom virtual video platform. Transcripts will be reviewed for accuracy, and notes will also be taken during each interview.

Thematic analysis of the interviews and focus group sessions begins with coding, that is, identifying meaningful categories (Creswell, 2013). Once data is coded, then meaningful categories are assigned from which themes that describe experiences can be identified. Themes are common ideas of the found data and can assist with answering the research question (Vaissmoradi et al., 2016). For this study, data analysis will follow the model developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The steps of this model include transcribing collected data, identifying and coding common data to develop themes, clarify ongoing analysis of selected themes, and connecting the finalized analysis with the research questions and literature review to expand on previous scholarly research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

NVivo software will be used to provide the researcher with the ability to store, manage, query, and analyze data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions. Using this online data analysis tool will supplement the manual coding process. Phillips and Lu (2018) recommended NVivo as the most appropriate for qualitative research since NVivo software allows for sorting and filtering raw data, creating relationships within the data, developing, and defining themes and categories for data, and creating reports and results to display within a study.

Throughout the data analysis, I will search and identify discrepant information. Participants may share different challenges and perceptions that may not fit with other participant interview or focus group data. Despite any differences in collected interview and focus group data, all data will be presented to ensure that all data is shared. Discrepant cases are just as important as all other interview and focus group data

collected and identifying discrepant cases confirms a credible account (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Throughout the entire research study, it will be the researcher's responsibility to apply qualitative perspectives to achieve and maintain trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is an important factor in academically sustaining the element of credible qualitative research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Trustworthiness within a qualitative research study includes a strategic research design method that incorporates creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It will be essential to stay true to all results found throughout the qualitative study. Since the reader will be judging the work presented, the researcher's responsibility will include showing and establishing accurate information obtained and concluded (Graneheim et al., 2017). In this qualitative inquiry study, procedures of trustworthiness will apply to increase different aspects related to creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. Overall, it will be important to establish clear roles and voices of the researcher and participants involved (Graneheim et al., 2017).

Credibility

Credibility references the ability of the researcher to show a believable analysis of the participants' experiences (Stahl & King, 2020). This qualitative study establishes creditability using triangulation, member checks, reflexivity, and peer review.

Triangulation involves using multiple avenues to accurately describe and present the research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). More specifically, triangulation is used to obtain data

with two sets of participants to display consistency and get data using one consistent method, such as interviewing. Having the ability to use different triangulation techniques will assist with further promoting the rigor that is needed for the study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Member checks will be utilized to allow for anonymous data to be collected and to share with the same participant group for further feedback on the overall research process (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Reflexivity will allow the researcher to inform other researchers that the study results are unique to the current research and very unlikely to be reproduced by other researchers (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Participants and exact locations will be unlikely to replicate in another research study. Furthermore, peer review from resources not wholly engaged in research but very familiar with the research process will be utilized to establish credibility with this current qualitative study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Credibility is also ensured through review of data collected by the committee chair and committee member to assist with probing for a deeper exploration of the methodological practices, theoretical framework, and overall research design to build a more vigorous research study (Stahl & King, 2020).

Transferability

Rose and Johnson (2020) define transferability as the researcher conveying research data so that it may be applied to similar settings or for different participant groups. The goal of this study is not to repeat the same results; instead, patterns and specific descriptions from one study could be identified in other studies despite different results (Stahl & King, 2020). However, to allow for transferability very thick and rich detail of the data will be presented (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Trustworthiness is an

important factor in academically sustaining the element of credible qualitative research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The importance of presenting clear ideas gathered from all participants will allow participant perspectives to have a contextualized meaning (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) established that dependability references the ability to allow for research analyses to be consistent and repeated. Throughout the entire research study, the researcher and all participants should display trust. Audit trails and triangulation elements are incorporated in the current research study to show and maintain such efforts. Audit trails reference the idea that those involved in the research, especially the researcher, will be able to speak strongly of their study as they are fully engaged in the study with genuine values which allow for another level of trust to be created and built upon (Stahl & King, 2020). Furthermore, the researcher will continue to review peers such as the committee chair and committee member to maintain the strong triangulation relationship throughout the study. Using triangulation alongside the dependability factors will allow for overlapping methods to push for a vital trustworthiness factor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Access to proper qualitative software such as NVivo will be required. It will be important to keep accurate notes on coding, data feedback, and even the development of results as recording and updating the research will often happen (Bengtsson, 2016).

Confirmability

Stahl and King (2020) described confirmability as allowing qualitative research to be as close to reality and objective as possible. For the current qualitative research to offer confirmability, the accuracy of the research must be present to support trustworthiness. Objectivity's responsibility to this qualitative research allowed data to have confirmability instead of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, the researcher must stay true to the provided data obtained, especially during virtual video interviews and focus group sessions, as this would be in the best interest of the researcher and participants. This current research would be a continuation of overlapping methods, and reflexivity would bring strength to the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Ethical Procedures

Before moving forward in the data collection process, I will need to engage with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to obtain research approval. Upon IRB approval, I will need to acquire agreements to access participants and data through local adult education programs relationships. These programs are the gatekeepers to potential participants of the study. Agreements to gain access to participants and data may arise from sharing with local adult education programs the honest intentions of my research study, professionally presenting myself at all times, and ensuring the value of protecting all participants throughout the entire study.

Throughout this generic qualitative study, the researcher will be responsible for abiding by ethical considerations primarily related to the Institutional Review Board

(IRB) at Walden University, confidentially, informed consent, and data storage. The IRB approval number for this study is pending. Upon local adult education program approval, attempts will be made to request participation in the study. The researcher must take certain precautions to protect confidential information (American Psychological Association, 2020). Participants will be informed that it is my full responsibility to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process. Furthermore, all participants will receive the same fair, and appropriate treatment deserved throughout the current research study.

If the researcher comes across any misuse within the study, it will be the researcher's responsibility to take the appropriate steps to correct the ethical issue immediately (American Psychological Association, 2020). Ethical concerns with participants could include problems with communication. Clear communication to each participant should be clear and appropriate throughout all contact attempts by phone and in written forms. To help eliminate communication concerns, I will be open with all communication and remember to ask participants if they have any questions or need clarification.

All participants must be made aware of the investigation, assessment, and consultations available throughout any study and the option to opt out at any time (Mohd Arifin, 2018). Providing informed consent at the beginning stages and before conducting research confirms to the participant that they are in control of their actions. Informed consent allows participants to make the best choice in their best interest (Mohd Arifin, 2018). Informed consent assist with the protection of the participant and guarantee's that

the researcher will provide all required information to avoid any harm to the participant (Mohd Arifin, 2018). All participants will be required to agree and sign the informed consent for this qualitative inquiry study as required by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participants will receive a copy of the signed informed consent form, as this serves as a reminder of what they have agreed to and their rights during this research process.

Interviews and the focus group will be conducted using the virtual platform Zoom. Zoom also records audio and transcripts will be prepared from each interview. I will be responsible for obtaining permission from each participant before recording both the interviews and the focus group session. Although each interview and focus group session will be recorded and transcribed, I will ensure that participant privacy is protected by keeping all recorded material and transcripts held within a password-secured flash drive. Within the research study, all identifying information of any participant and details of the local adult education program will not be disclosed. Instead, participants will be labeled with a number to keep data separate and secure. A general region will be used to describe the local adult education programs.

All recorded and transcribed data will remain confidential information to the research study. All audio and electronic data related to this qualitative inquiry study will be stored on a secured flash drive. Any physical data such as the flash drives will be held in the available fireproof safe in the researcher's home office. The researcher will always possess fireproof safe key access. All files will be destroyed after a five-year possession of these items.

Summary

Formerly incarcerated women face challenges in developing good study habits within adult education programs. This generic qualitative inquiry study will explore the study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs. The theoretical framework that will be used for this study was developed by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles, 1980), and primarily focuses on adult learning methods as adults learn differently than children. The research questions for this study were designed to help better understand study habit challenges of formerly incarcerated women and to explore study habit strategies that program staff perceive to support learning environments for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs. The convenience sampling method would be used to recruit participants for the study to help execute the data analysis plan for the study. The study will include 8-10 formerly incarcerated women and 6-8 program staff interviewed. The findings may lead to the development of educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women.

Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study. It will describe the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This study aimed to describe study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs in a Middle Atlantic urban region. I sought to answer two research questions in this qualitative inquiry study:

RQ1: How do formerly incarcerated women describe their study habit challenges in adult education programs?

RQ2: What study habit strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women?

Eight formerly incarcerated women were interviewed about their challenges with study habits while enrolled in adult education programs. Eight program staff participated in a focus group session to help determine what study habit strategies have helped provide a supportive learning environment. Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) guided my interpretations of the challenges formerly incarcerated women experienced and the program staff's experiences.

In this chapter, I describe the study's setting, the demographics of the participant pool, and the data collection and analysis process. Any unexpected changes and deviations from the planned recruitment strategy are described. I also discuss the findings related to the research question.

Setting

I conducted this study from my home office in York, Pennsylvania. All interviews were completed virtually using Zoom meeting software on a laptop to accommodate

flexibility with all participants who volunteered for the study. All interviews were conducted in my home office to ensure each participant's rights to confidentiality and privacy. Providing virtual interview options to participants allowed each participant to select their preferred and private location to complete the interview. Participants selected sites unknown to me, the researcher; however, they were chosen as places of comfort to each participant where they could interview without disruption and provided a safe place to disclose information.

Demographics

Two samples of participants were selected to conduct this study. The first sample was comprised of eight formerly incarcerated women in adult education programs. The second sample of participants included eight program staff members who work within adult education programs. I recruited each sample of participants using the flyer indicating the inclusion criteria and contact information. The flyer was posted with the selected local adult education program, who agreed to partner with the study anonymously. The initial recruitment strategy of posting the flyer and word of mouth remained the same.

The initial recruitment process was slow in gaining the required number of participants for both sample sets. Encouraging spreading the word about the research study among those willing to participate helped gain the required number of participants and provided additional time to obtain participants. The method of obtaining participants for this current study is called convenience sampling, in which the researcher collects data from those who want to participate (Scholtz, 2021).

Once the required number of participants was obtained for each sample set, flyers were removed, and the study was closed to any additional participants. I protected the confidentiality of all participants by creating participant identification codes and randomly assigning them to each participant, regardless of the order in which they signed up to participate. I obtained consent from each participant by informing them of the study's purpose and their role as a participant before each interview started and before the session. Each participant was told that their confidentiality would be protected throughout the process. Those participants in the focus group session were asked to avoid sharing any information from the study with anyone. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could leave the study at any time as they saw fit. Those participants who completed the interview and focus group session in full received \$20 Amazon gift cards for completion. No additional details were noted on those formerly incarcerated women participants; however, for those program staff participants within the focus group session, some demographics were recorded as they related to years of experience and roles within adult education programs. This information is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1*Program Staff Participant Years of Experience and Roles*

| Participant | Years of Experience and Role |
|---------------|---|
| Participant 1 | 9 years of student advising |
| Participant 2 | 5 years of teaching adult education on a part time capacity |
| Participant 3 | A total of 15 years of experience in the education system while 3 years of that experience was teaching adult education |
| Participant 4 | 25 years of experience in the education system and 17 years of that experience was teaching adult education |
| Participant 5 | 4 years of tutoring adults in math and reading areas and currently working on their 6 th year in student advising |
| Participant 6 | 22 years of total experiences within the education and system and the last 10 years has been with teaching adult education |
| Participant 7 | 8 years of adult education |
| Participant 8 | 4 years of student advising and currently working on their 8 th year of program management within the education system |

Data Collection

Data were collected through virtual interviews with formerly incarcerated women and a focus group with program staff employed within an adult education setting session conducted solely by me, using an interview guide I created for this study. Each virtual interview took place at a location of the participant's discretion, and I was located in my home office during the discussions. I used audio recording for each interview and the focus group session within the Zoom meeting platform. The interviews and focus group sessions were initially scheduled for 1 hour. However, interviews spanned between 30 and 45 minutes, while the focus group session lasted 50 minutes. I used the transcript option software that Zoom provides. I also took extra steps to review the transcribed interviews and focus group sessions for accuracy several times while replaying the audio simultaneously.

Furthermore, I copied the transcriptions into Word documents, removed all identifying information, and used randomly assigned identification codes to identify participants within interviews and focus groups. All identifying information were redacted to ensure confidentiality. Each interview document and the focus group session were saved as a Word document using the participants' identification code as the document name. All Word documents were uploaded into NVivo for analysis purposes. I downloaded the interviews and focus group session onto a password-protected flash drive. There were no documents saved to my laptop. All errors were corrected, resulting in verbatim transcription of the interviews and focus group sessions. After the transcriptions were completed, all recordings were stored in a password-protected flash drive. The redacted documents were created for confidentiality and coding purposes. This study did not complete member checking during the interview and focus group session.

Data Analysis

Once transcriptions were developed using the transcribing features available in the Zoom meeting platform, I reviewed each participant's transcript and the focus group discussion for accuracy and scrubbed any participant-identifying information. After cleaning up each transcription, I renamed each participant with an identification code within each transcript. Then, I uploaded Word document versions of these interviews to the NVivo software. Focus group participants' identifying information was also redacted and renamed. All steps encompassed the first step within the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach. Once participant individual interview transcripts were imported into NVivo along with the focus group session transcript, research questions for

each participant group were labeled to assist with identifying and coding standard information for theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Research questions were labeled as the following:

RQ1: How do formerly incarcerated women describe their study habit challenges in adult education programs? The responses were labeled as *Study habit challenges*.

RQ2: What study habit strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women? The responses were labeled as *Study habit strategies*.

Themes were developed in each transcript by highlighting keywords, phrases, and statements within each participant's response and categorized to fit within each research question category. After reviewing this information twice for accuracy, I transferred my coding techniques from NVivo to Microsoft Word to continue clarifying the ongoing analysis of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) appropriate for this qualitative inquiry study. I could download the NVivo output coding into a Word document in which I could identify references to each theme created. This enabled me to verify that the data found and the developed themes were responsive to the research questions and literature review and allowed me to describe study habit challenges and highlight study habit strategies that were perceived as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women.

During my analysis of data, I found patterns for each research question. For RQ1, I found 29 references that can be categorized as study habit challenges. Of those 29 references, nine themes were developed. They included the following: accurately

recording information, communicating to understand the environment, lack of motivation, organization, procrastination, student study group challenges, time, and being unaware of other study habit strategies. Time was referenced nine times, and student study group challenges were referenced eight times. I also found 35 references that can be categorized as study habit strategies. Of that, a total of 10 themes were developed within RQ2. Those 10 themes included the following methods: house-made flashcards, independent student study groups, independent studying, marking key terms or information, music, practice math strategies, reading notes, self-quiz, study one class at a time, and time management. Reading notes were referenced the most at 11 different times, while house-made flashcards were referenced the second most at other times.

After transferring the coding from NVivo to Word, I could continue creating clusters to help bridge the gap distinctly within my research. For RQ1, I developed 3 clusters: Common Mistakes with Studying, Student Challenges – External, and Student Challenges – Internal. I categorized the codes and have displayed Table 2 below.

Table 2

Research Question 1 Clusters

| Cluster 1: Common Mistakes with Studying | Cluster 2: Student Challenges - External | Cluster 3: Student Challenges - Internal |
|--|--|--|
| Accurately recording information | Environment | Lack of motivation |
| Communicating to understand | Student study group challenges | Procrastination |
| Organization | Time | Unaware of other study habit strategies |

For RQ2, I developed 2 clusters, including Student Studying Techniques and Supportive Learning Environments. I categorized the codes and have displayed Table 3 below.

Table 3

Research Question 2 Clusters

| Cluster 1: Student Studying Techniques | Cluster 2: Supportive Learning Environments |
|--|---|
| House-made flashcards | Independent student study groups |
| Marking key terms or information | Independent studying |
| Practice math strategies | Music |
| Reading notes | Study one class at a time |
| Self-Quiz | Time Management |

Once my coding and clusters were finalized, I developed overarching themes that helped develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. This thematic analysis approach allowed for data collection established within the data analysis plan (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this point within my analysis, I can answer both research questions that helped to guide my study. A deeper discussion of the themes identified and their relationship to the research question and literature review is discussed in this chapter's results section.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is established using four components: creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

These components were considered in all areas of study to help determine trustworthiness.

Credibility

This qualitative study established credibility using triangulation and reflexivity. Triangulation involves multiple participants within two participant groups. Participants provided experiences using their thoughts and feelings, making themes unique and genuinely contributing to the study. Reflexivity allows a researcher to inform other researchers that the results of a research study are unique and unlikely to be reproduced (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

Transferability involves a researcher's ability to provide very detailed experiences through research data so it can be applied to future and similar research by others (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Transferability is represented within the investigation when the researcher provides ample research data that develops into meaningful themes that can bridge a gap within the literature. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined dependability as being consistent and repetitive. Using tools such as NVivo for coding and building themes within this current research study assisted with keeping accurate information properly. Confirmability makes qualitative research as precise as possible (Stahl & King, 2020). Confirmability is best displayed within the current study through overlapping methods of trustworthiness, which improves the strength of trustworthiness (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Results

The following section presents the findings of this qualitative inquiry study. During my research, I had two participant groups from which I collected data. My first group of participants included eight formerly incarcerated women currently enrolled in adult education programs. My second group of participants included eight program staff members who have been or are currently employed by an adult education program. I interviewed each formerly incarcerated woman individually and held one focus group session with program staff. The goal of the research questions was to describe study habit challenges and highlight study habit strategies that were perceived as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women.

The results are presented using themes to address two research questions. Braun and Clarke (2022) suggested that themes should tell a sequentially ordered story about the collected data in a manner considered rich, complex, and multifaceted, presenting a meaningful understanding of the results. Furthermore, standards should include no overlapping meanings within the researcher's themes, a well-balanced presentation of the data interpretations, and no one-word-only naming conventions (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Results are explained first with themes for RQ1, following the themes associated with RQ2. Table 4 presents the themes for each of the research questions. In this section, I review each theme in detail.

Table 4*Research Question 1 and Data Themes*

| Research Question | Data Themes |
|--|--|
| RQ1: How do formerly incarcerated women describe their study habit challenges in adult education programs? | Theme 1: Common mistakes with studying Theme 2: Student challenges - external Theme 3: Student challenges - internal |

Research Question 1

The first research question was: How do formerly incarcerated women describe their study habit challenges in adult education programs? Three main themes emerged from this research question.

Theme 1: Common challenges with studying

The first theme developed from individual interviews with formerly incarcerated women participants. I asked participants to describe the challenges of using particular study habit strategies. Each individual provided feedback within the same realm of accurately recording information and communicating to understand discussion topics and organization. Participant A shared the challenge of “making sure that I write down the right information, especially during lectures” as an area of concern, while Participant G explained that they have to “write things over and over again”. Participant A and G’s feedback provided information on accurate recording. Participant H mentioned that they keep organized with their studying by “planning time to study throughout the week”, especially when they are on their travels for the day.

During individual participant interviews, Participant A mentioned their difficulty in understanding the information presented by the course instructor. They would ask

questions in the classroom but needed clarification about the instructor's responses.

Participant A mentioned finding more clarity when they "talk to classmates about the same stuff," while Participant D utilized quick study sessions throughout the week to be of value as they are more engaged in classroom topics by "talking more during classroom discussions." In other interviews, Participant B attempted to work with other students to prepare themselves for course room assignments better and did not find value as they believed they had "a bad experience with studying with someone else". Participant B shared that they "talked about everything but what they were supposed to be studying for", which caused terrible grades on an upcoming quiz.

Theme 2: Student challenges - External

The second theme that developed from the individual interviews with formerly incarcerated women participants was challenges - external. This cluster included common participant feedback surrounding the environment, student study group challenges, and time management challenges for students in many cases. During the individual interview with Participant C, they expressed that their home has limited space, making it "difficult to create the space or environment to study". With the busy personal lifestyle that Participant C described being a caretaker, the home appeared not to be the best-suited space to study. Participant G shared that "they do not like to depend on other people to help with studying". Although they see success with study groups with feedback from other classmates, it is something that they are not interested in, as scheduling seems to be a significant concern. Participants all have busy lifestyles and are all in unique situations, especially since most of the participants in the individual interviews are caretakers in

different capacities. They either have to contribute financially by working one or more jobs or taking care of family members at home, and some participants only have access to public transportation versus owning their means of transportation.

Furthermore, Participant D described their heavy responsibility at home: “being a mom and a caretaker for my mother”. Although completing their education was something they wanted for themselves, Participant D met school items “with little to no support” and often found themselves “on the bus or during their lunch breaks pulling out notes to review” what they can. With all that Participant D has been responsible for, their circumstances seem to be a roadblock to being able to manage time or at least finding enough time to study. Participant D also mentioned not having a great experience with student study groups as many of their classmates have children, which appeared to distract from studying during the evening hours.

The majority of the participants in the study were hesitant to work with study groups that students put together. Some participants found challenges with just studying because of a variety of distractions. Participant C was the only participant who saw the benefits of participating in student study group sessions despite their busy lifestyles. One participant had an interesting perspective that represented an outlier to the more common answers regarding challenges with study habits. Participant G mentioned that “age may be my biggest challenge with using study habits”, and the participant also alluded to the amount of time that needs to be dedicated to studying. Other participants mentioned time from the perspective of having heavy household responsibilities and multiple job schedules compared to Participant G’s challenge with time due to their age.

Theme 3: Student challenges - Internal

Internal student challenges were a theme formed from the data collected from individual interviews with formerly incarcerated female participants. Many students expressed their challenges when asked to share. I noticed that participants needed to be made aware of other helpful study habit strategies, stumbled with procrastination, and required more motivation after navigating such busy lifestyles. Although the theme could sound negative, in some cases, students lacked accountability because of personal circumstances. In the case of the participants who volunteered for this study, in no way is the theme of lacking accountability to be portrayed as a negative attribute. Participant C noted a lack of motivation to study, especially after having such a long day. She stated, “I’m a busy person. I have two jobs and a family that I help to take care of, so at the end of the day and even after class, I don’t want to look at anything”. However, Participant C also found motivation in studying with other students as they believed everyone who wanted to learn “was all there for a common goal.”

Multiple accounts from formerly incarcerated female participants indicated during individual interviews that they needed to be made aware of other study habit strategies or were not open to using different study habit strategies as they were comfortable with the results of their current study habit methods. Challenges with study habits also arose with personal procrastination that took place due to the day-to-day activities of students. Although participants did not blatantly disclose procrastination, evidence of procrastination was represented in discussions about avoiding studying after long workdays and fulfilling caretaker roles. Furthermore, participants experienced

procrastination during student study group meetups when students needed help to learn due to the distractions that hindered the process.

Table 5

Research Question 2 and Data Themes

| Research Question | Data Themes |
|---|---|
| RQ2: What study habit strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women? | Theme 1: Student studying techniques Theme 2: Supportive learning environments |

Research Question 2

The second research question was: What study habits strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women? Two themes emerged from this research question.

Theme 1: Student studying techniques

Participants provided straightforward responses describing everyday study habits that students often believe they learn more from (Ewell et al., 2022). In many cases, when speaking with program staff participants, it was noted that students selected student study habit strategies because that is what they know, what they are comfortable with, and what they were used to, as it was a pattern of familiarity. Program staff participants expressed that they encouraged students to use study habit methods that they were comfortable with which included using homemade flashcards, marking terms and critical information, practicing math strategies repetitively to remember the steps to solve specific math problems, reading notes repeatedly, and self-quizzes to help them learn information.

Participant 5 expressed that they “try to encourage the process with learners going with what they know best works for them.” There were several accounts where participants shared that they use interactive classroom game challenges to help students with studying. Participant 2 of the program staff participant group shared that their classes “play a form of Jeopardy, Family Feud but I call it Classmate Feud, and even BINGO is a favorite in some of my study sessions as well”.

Theme 2: Supportive learning environments

The supportive learning environments theme was developed to conclude the story being shared. It is essential to provide students with learning environments that are comfortable and even intentional to thrive within. Program staff participants have come from all sorts of educational backgrounds and experience levels, which provided ample insight that encourages a range of students at all levels of their learning journeys. Feedback from program staff about providing supportive learning environments for students included independent student study groups, study groups organized by the course instructor, the use of music, studying for classes one at a time, and time management strategies.

A focus group session was conducted with eight program staff who confirmed they had different levels of experience and held various roles within the adult education field. Those experience levels ranged between 5 and 25 years at both part- or full-time opportunities as an adult program manager, adult educator, student advisor, and tutor. A 45-minute focus group session was held virtually using the Zoom platform, where participants were asked to share their knowledge and experience around the study habit

strategies they were aware of being implemented, and what has been working to provide supportive learning environments for adult learners. Program staff participants shared current and past experiences, and each participant was labeled with a numbering system to mask any participant identification information.

Participant 5 shared that they had been a student advisor for the last five years and had worked in tutoring services four years prior. While working in tutoring services, it was important for team members to encourage students to use study strategies that they were most familiar with and that worked best for them. Participant 5 explained that for math coursework, repetition is used to follow steps to solve math problems successfully. Participant 2 chimed in to share that they work as an adult educator and have first-hand classroom experience in providing classroom student study sessions. When Participant 2 is preparing for upcoming testing, they utilize classroom study sessions with games that test student knowledge, as they also see this as a method to minimize test anxiety and build confidence with the course material. Participant 2 recreated games to study using forms of Jeopardy and Family Feud renamed Classroom Feud BINGO. Participant 3 and Participant 6 also added that they use classroom strategies similar to Participant 2 regarding games. Participant 6 also shared that they were not using Classroom Feud but planned on following up with Participant 2 to inquire more about that game recreation.

Detailed notetaking and flashcard usage were also study habit strategies mentioned during the focus group session participants. Participant 4 explained during the focus group session that they provide their students with opportunities during testing times to pull out their notes for some time to adjust any too difficult answers. Participant

4 also mentioned that they noticed increased confidence when entering testing periods.

Although not mentioned by program staff, during an individual interview with a formerly incarcerated female participant, it was said that listening to music during study sessions helped them keep focus. Within the focus group session, participants displayed similar strategies among each other that they thought led to supportive learning environments for adult learners.

Summary

As previously stated, this study aims to describe study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs in a Middle Atlantic urban region. This chapter has identified the data collection process, the creation and review of its themes, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results. Chapter 5 will include interpreting the results influenced by the theoretical framework that structures the study. The limitations and strengths will also be reviewed, and recommendations for future research will be suggested. The study's impact on social change will be presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

“The challenges for a person re-entering society from prison are many, and success is not the norm” (Arnold, 2023, p. 57). Providing supportive learning environments could assist those formerly incarcerated individuals with the ability to be successful, especially within their educational careers, to overcome the challenges not only associated with education but also in the world. The purpose of the study was to describe study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs. Furthermore, there was a further aim to develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. This study aimed to uncover study habit challenges and potentially offer methods to improve supportive learning environments for students. Findings revealed that formerly incarcerated individuals could experience study habit challenges within adult education programs. However, those participants in this current study also indicated moments of their busy lifestyles and shared repetitive study habits that they depend on for success.

I conducted individual interviews with formerly incarcerated women participants and a focus group with program staff employed with adult education programs. Discussions within individual interviews explored study habit challenges within adult education programs. In contrast, focus group discussions provided details into available study habits and resources that could help provide supportive learning environments. Eight formerly incarcerated women provided insight into everyday study habits and

challenges that any adult learner could potentially experience. After conducting interviews, *common mistakes with studying*, *student challenges - external and student challenges - internal* themes were developed to express the commonalities formerly incarcerated women adult learners could encounter. Eight program staff participated in a focus group where *student studying techniques and supportive learning environment themes* were developed to also explore the foundation of a supportive learning environment.

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 4 and includes interpretations of findings with the existing literature and theoretical framework. Limitations are presented in this chapter, along with recommendations to students, those who work within adult education programs, and researchers for future research. A summary and closing remarks conclude Chapter 5 and the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

After analyzing the data from the interviews and the focus group, I could find another understanding of the experiences that formerly incarcerated women typically encounter and how program staff provide supportive learning environments with engaging study habit methods. I gathered previous research on the history of incarceration and education, re-entry, and study habits and applied the andragogy theoretical framework to my research developed by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles, 1980). My findings from the study detailed a wealth of information that could be shared in a realm of limited research specifically focused on formerly incarcerated females.

Findings showed that formerly incarcerated women participants faced personal obstacles that imposed challenging education obtainment. Previously, the literature showed that formerly incarcerated women experienced significant challenges that did not support having the time to obtain an education (Ahmed et al., 2019). Participants shared that they are the primary caretakers at home and financially. In some cases, participants cared for children and elderly family members. Living arrangements were not with smaller spaces and multiple family schedules with the occupation of home space. Work obligations also took a toll on current study participants as some held various jobs while also being enrolled students. Participants in this recent study should have mentioned frustrations with student support from their adult education programs, which could allude to supportive learning environments. Other research determined a need for more supportive learning environments; however, this previous research found a lack within post-release education programs offered in adult education programs specific to formerly incarcerated women (Baranger et al., 2018). The difference in lack of support opinions could be for various reasons in different research settings and goals. Despite research differences, Williams et al. (2019) deduced that a lack of supportive learning environments had valuable consequences for students as they tried to obtain other lifestyle necessities such as housing and employment. For participants in this current study, most students worked harder to provide, and furthering their education was important.

I thought it was interesting to compare the findings of my current study to the results of the work conducted by Binder et al. (2020), in which they discovered common

themes of liberal arts students enrolled as incarcerated students. The themes discussed in this previous research concluded that discussion-based learning, respectful student and staff relationships, and academic rigor positively impacted student success (Binder et al., 2020). After reviewing interview and focus group transcripts within my current study, I can identify findings of moments where students appreciated the classroom time taken to study alongside each other and program staff building in the time for students to review the material. The respect between students and staff is evident within the shared experiences of improving student success. Furthermore, students showing up and identifying their lack of accountability and being aware of their challenges shows that the seriousness of academic rigor is still alive in participants, especially those with challenging circumstances.

Within the literature review, I discovered that re-entry could be challenging for any person who was previously incarcerated. More specifically, I found in my research studies that previously incarcerated women are more likely to be the primary and, in some cases, the sole provider for their households with lower educational backgrounds compared to formerly incarcerated men (McClearen et al., 2021). Knowing this information, as a student researcher, I wanted to dive deeper into studies about women. I noticed in my research that the findings suggested that most of the volunteered participants were the primary providers of their homes. I could see that program staff have an idea of personal challenges among students regardless of their backgrounds, so in such cases, resources that could improve student study habits are encouraged in educational settings. Jaggi and Kliever (2020) concluded that educational resources are

critical interventions, especially when made available to formerly incarcerated individuals.

Lastly, I focused on study habits within my literature review, which is the basis of my current study. Throughout my findings, program staff shared that they encourage students to use study habit strategies that they are comfortable with. Formerly incarcerated women participants appear to share similar thoughts and experiences, including some common gripes about studying with other students versus using individual studying practices. Most of the study habits used included flashcards, reading over notes and the class text, and practice questions, which all appeared to be repetitive. Stojanovic et al. (2020) previously shared that academic success requires repetitive patterns of behavior, which could confirm that these participants are using such strategies to gain that educational success. To add to the supported research, Rowell et al. (2021) expressed that students learn by using specific study habit strategies. In the current research, findings have suggested particular strategies and aligned with most participants who shared their study habits strategies. Within focus groups with program staff participants, the results give the impression that methods are being taught and shown within adult education programs. Program staff shared that they engage in classroom trivia games and open note sessions during testing, which appeared to show student engagement. These findings support the previous literature, reflecting the importance of students learning with available academic learning approaches as it contributes to academic program improvement (Faranda et al., 2021).

In my previous research, it was not surprising to find that study habits strategies must be creative and tactful to contribute positively to student learning (Hensley, 2020). I saw commonalities between my current study and Hensley (2020), as my research also demonstrated evidence of both active and passive student study habits. My interviews and focus group discussions expressed a strong sense of active study habits using concepts that engaged memory, asking questions to understand, using flashcards, utilizing practice questions, especially for technical topics, and even sharing classroom strategies among peers. In this case, peers would represent program staff sharing strategies as peers representing student-to-student interactions for studying purposes. Passive study habits are still being used despite the few benefits they could offer student learning (Rowell et al., 2021).

A finding in the current research also showed that it still exists in note-taking and re-reading course room text. Although a deeper dive was not explored with program staff during the focus group to discuss teaching students how to pass the test (Faranda et al., 2021), findings suggest that students argued to learn rather than be taught to pass the course exams. Additionally, Hawkins et al. (2021) indicated that study habits are rarely taught as their studies showed differences among students given the resources for time management and study habit methods versus those given different resources to explore. Students may need to realize that the time spent playing trivia games and engaging in classroom discussions are considered study habit methods. Findings in my current study show that students recognize time management challenges, especially balancing personal difficulties with keeping up with their educational studies.

Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) was selected as the theoretical framework for this qualitative inquiry research study. As found in the previous literature, the meaning of the theory of andragogy was deeply coined as adult learners should have the opportunity to learn using different methods and less of those used to teach children (Knowles, 1980). Andragogy has five assumptions, four of which were identified within this current research: self-concept, adult learner experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learn. In previous literature, it mentioned that some methods of andragogy were applied within their studies as well (Anderson & Boutelier, 2021; Bengo, 2020).

The following assumptions are listed, and the findings are interpreted where connections exist.

1. Self-concept occurs when a person develops from a dependent human being to an independent individual (Knowles, 1980). It is assumed that a person will develop into an independent individual at their own rate of time and life experiences. It was thought during the literature review of the theoretical framework that this assumption related to the current research since participants in the study have taken the initiative to navigate their lives in a different direction than previously lived. Within the recent research, this assumption relates to the current research as formerly incarcerated women participants are developing into independent individuals through taking responsibility for accomplishing educational goals which the use of study habit methods that could help contribute to successful education attainment.

2. The assumption about adult learner experience is that adults display knowledge based on previous experiences, unlike children relying on external sources limited to family, where they live, and school (Knowles, 1980). In the current research, challenges of adult learners were identified when expressing their study habit likes and dislikes. The adult learner experience assumption relates to this current study as formerly incarcerated women participants take their educational goals seriously as participants appear to have the autonomy to choose what study habit methods work and do not work for them personally. Formerly incarcerated women participants shared what study habit methods they were comfortable using and what challenges they needed to overcome to complement their educational success. Program staff participants have backgrounds in various adult education settings with a wide range of years of experience, which supports this assumption that program staff's previous backgrounds could contribute to the availability of study habit methods available within adult education programs overall. Program staff participants recognized during the focus group sessions the success of adult learners as they incorporate study habit methods while in the classroom and when students prepare for assessments.
3. The readiness to learn assumption is based on learning new tasks and how adults must complete steps to learn a task (Knowles, 1980). More specifically, the readiness assumption is applied in cases of an adult learner having the desire to learn something to resolve issues. The action of formerly

incarcerated women participants enrolling in coursework in an area of interest alludes to participants addressing a personal or professional issue by applying study habits to learn the material of a class topic which contributes to learning a new task as studying is a step to learning. On the other hand, program staff participants provide the environment for students to learn with resources to succeed, which appears to guide the readiness to learn for students.

4. The fourth assumption is the orientation to learn, which aligns with adults who believe education attainment could improve current situations and live to their highest potential (Knowles, 1980). According to the data, formerly incarcerated women participants, are taking on the challenges of obtaining their educational credentials to improve their life situations. Program staff participants of this study shared that students show up to class, participate in classroom discussions, take notes, engage in student activities related to coursework, and even take on outside initiatives with independent studying methods. Efforts from both formerly incarcerated women and program staff participants relate to the fourth assumption as formerly incarcerated women participants hope that the steps that they take now will lead to future opportunities.
5. Lastly, the fifth assumption was later described as the motivation to learn, which assumes adults learn for many different reasons that are personal to them (Knowles, 1984). As mentioned previously, motivation was not the focus of this current research study; however, many participants noted a lack

of motivation after challenging and busy lifestyles. Although students may feel a lack of motivation, it still exists within these volunteer participants as they attend class and complete assignments and associated tasks to succeed in their education attainment.

Findings within this study and the selected theoretical framework andragogy help establish the foundation for developing educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. The findings of this study pose limitations, recommendations, and implications, which are discussed in the following few sections of Chapter 5.

Limitations of the Study

In addition to the limitations discussed in Chapter 1, this generic qualitative inquiry study also has limitations within its findings. Formerly incarcerated women participants in interviews and program staff participants in the focus group provided insight into their challenges and suggestions of what supportive learning environments entail, which could evolve into recommendations for future implementation of improved study habits but could still present limited challenges for study habits. A convenience sampling technique was used in this current study; however, this sampling technique could potentially result in limitations to the study as the researcher accepted all volunteers on a first-come basis. Perhaps other sampling techniques could be implemented to minimize limitations in the findings. The sampling size collected data that could pose as another limitation of the study. Data presented in this study only represents a tiny population of formerly incarcerated women and program staff employed

by adult education programs. The study habit methods that could work for this small participation group of formerly incarcerated women may not work for similar individuals enrolled in different adult education programs and within other regions worldwide. Furthermore, program staff participants who have shared ideas about what supports good study habits that they are aware of versus program staff not included in this current study may have other methods of support unbeknownst to this study. There could have been additional information that each participant decided to withhold from the discussion for personal reasons, unbeknownst to the study's researcher and the participants within the current research.

Additionally, to avoid contributing my own researcher biases toward the current research study, especially with my previous knowledge and work experience with recruitment and human resources, I upheld my integrity by following all interview and focus group guides established before collecting data. As the researcher for this current study, I reminded all participants of their ability to withdraw from the study at any given time and for any reason. Thankfully, all participants who volunteered completed the study in its entirety and within a reasonable scheduling timeframe despite a few scheduling hiccups that were resolved quickly between the researcher and undisclosed participants.

Recommendations

Additional research is needed to explore the improvement in academic achievement of formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs who use study habits they are comfortable with as opposed to newly taught and implemented

study habits that encourage students out of their comfort zones. During this study, participants discussed being open to different study habits. Still, they may need to realize the study methods implemented during classroom time may not be replicated successfully and independently for students to contribute to their academic success. Contacting other adult education programs within different regions of the world to discover their educational resources that contribute to enhancing study habit strategies. This current study collected data from one area and one adult education program.

Furthermore, increasing the number of participants across the newly selected regions and adult education programs could shed light on a larger picture of the formerly incarcerated women population that may still need to be represented in this study. My study was limited to eight formerly incarcerated women participants and eight program staff employed by adult education programs and did not include any male participants or currently incarcerated individuals. Even from a quantitative research design perspective, additional recommendations could involve tracking student programs, either short or long-term, alongside the types of study habits being used.

Implications

Positive social change may be accomplished through adult education programs establishing more time in the classroom to practice study habit strategies individually and among their peers in various methods. This could help improve student performance, competency, and self-confidence that may be related to educational attainment, especially for formerly incarcerated women enrolled in adult education programs. Implementing more study time in the classroom could enable program staff to recognize gaps in

learning. For larger adult learner populations, this research could shed light on study habit methods that other existing programs did not consider previously. The implications of social change on a societal level could address job opportunities, further education beyond current educational classes, and financial gains to help pour back into an inflated economy. This present study aimed to seek more information about the challenges formerly incarcerated women face in developing good study habits. The positive social change implications of this study help to illuminate what could further improve study habit strategies for formerly incarcerated women participants enrolled in adult education programs of the current research, those individuals who have shared similar experiences, and those groups and or businesses that could offer future opportunities to participants and similar counterparts.

Conclusion

During my study, I explored study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs. During my literature review, I commented that there is undoubtedly limited research on formerly incarcerated women when compared to studies that flourish their data on male and mixed-gendered participant studies. Formerly incarcerated women participants reported their challenges with study habits, their comforts with specific study habit strategies, and also shed light on their lifestyles. Program staff participants generally shared details about their previous experiences with student study habits, classroom methods, and a wealth of experience levels and areas within adult education, such as tutoring services, student advising, classroom instructors, and program management. Themes helped establish clarity and a story of the potential

light on formerly incarcerated female students enrolled in adult education programs.

Themes for formerly incarcerated women participants included common mistakes with studying, preventing circumstances, and students' need for more accountability. For focus group participants, comments shed light on a helpful and encouraging educational environment, including patterns, comfort, and intentional learning environments.

In summary, formerly incarcerated participants are using study habits that are most comfortable for students to use, given the topic of discussion. Multiple participants expressed repetitive type studying habits such as reading over notes, using flashcards, and self-quizzing. Program staff offered additional insight into the classroom as it relates to giving time to students to ask questions and play games to practice the material. These findings highlight support is provided in adult education programs but may need additional methods of improvement to continue to allow for education needs to be met, especially for students who have experienced unique past challenges.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction

Hello, my name is Milan Williams. I am a Ph.D. student at Walden University's School of Psychology, specializing in Educational Psychology. I am conducting the study: Formerly Incarcerated Women Describe Study Habit Challenges Within Adult Education Programs. This study's results may contribute to social change by providing a better understanding of the study challenges described by formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs and what study habit strategies adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women. Additionally, I hope to develop educational recommendations to promote successful study habits and potentially further educational attainment for formerly incarcerated women. This interview is entirely voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time for any reason.

| Research Question | Interview Questions |
|---|--|
| RQ 1: How do formerly incarcerated women describe their study habit challenges in their adult education programs? | <p>IQ1: Can you describe your current study habits?</p> <p>Probe: What type of study habits have been working for you?</p> <p>IQ2: What has been your greatest challenge with using study habits?</p> <p>Probe: What type of study habits have not been working for you?</p> <p>Probe: Access to resources such as tutoring, advisors, or students to help with this?</p> <p>Probe: Any specific techniques that have been suggested to you?</p> |

| Research Question | Interview Questions |
|--|--|
| RQ 2: What study habit strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women? | <p data-bbox="846 306 1412 380">IQ1: What study habit strategies are you aware of currently being implemented?</p> <p data-bbox="846 411 1412 527">Probe: Whether it's during classroom time, office hours, or even during tutoring sessions</p> <p data-bbox="846 558 1412 674">IQ2: What study habit strategies do you believe work for providing supportive learning environments?</p> <p data-bbox="846 705 1412 762">Probe: Why are these strategies working over others?</p> |

I would like to thank you for your time participating in my study. I appreciate your flexibility and willingness to meet with me to share your experiences. It was very informative. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appendix B: Focus Group Guide for Staff

Consent Process

Focus group participants seeking to participate complete consent forms in advance.

Thank you for agreeing to participate. I am very interested to hear your feedback on what study habit strategies do adult education program staff perceive as providing supportive learning environments for formerly incarcerated women.

- *The purpose of this study is to describe study habit challenges for formerly incarcerated women within adult education programs*
- *The information you provide me is completely confidential, and your name will not be associated with anything you say in the focus group.*
- *I would like to record the focus groups so that I can make sure to capture all the important feedback from the group. No names will be attached to the focus groups and the recording will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.*
- *You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time.*
- *I understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. I will ask participants to respect each other's confidentiality.*
- *If you have any questions now or after you have completed the questionnaire, you can always contact me directly by email.*

Introduction:

1. Welcome

- Who I am and what the purpose of the study is.
- What will be done with this information.
- Why I asked staff to participate.

2. Explanation of the process

Ask the group if anyone has participated in a focus group before. Explain that focus groups are being used more and more often in research.

About focus groups

- I learn from you (positive and negative).
- Not trying to achieve consensus, I'm gathering information.

Logistics

- Focus group will last about one hour.
 - Feel free to keep camera on or off.
3. Ground Rules
 - Everyone should participate.
 - Information provided in the focus group must be kept confidential.
 - Feel free to provide feedback within the chat also especially if you are agreeing with another individual's comments.
 - Please mute when not speaking if possible.
 - Have fun!
 4. Turn on Zoom Recording option.
 5. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started and address those questions.
 6. Introductions
 - Go around table: Position title, years with current employer, and overall experience years.

Researcher Note to Self: Give people time to think before answering the questions and don't move too quickly. Use the probes to make sure that all issues are addressed but move on when you feel you are starting to hear repetitive information.

Questions:

1. What study habit strategies are you aware of currently being implemented?

Probes for Discussion:

Whether it's during classroom time, office hours, or even during tutoring sessions.

2. What study habit strategies do you believe work for providing supportive learning environments?

Probes for Discussion:

Why are these strategies working over others?

That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for your participation and sharing your thoughts and opinions with me. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the focus group, please feel free to follow up with me by email.