

## **How a personal development program enhances social connection and mobilises women in the community**

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*Gender equity and the empowerment of women is a significant international issue. Successful adult education programs are vital to enhance women's situation. Lessons learned from a personal development program provided for thousands of women are analysed. The program is conducted by community service providers in Australia and internationally, with an Australian evaluation reported here. The three phase evaluation included 500 participants, with pre- and post-tests for a sample of 161, structured phone interviews with 53 and third-party observations from six organisations. The value includes multiple measurements over time, in a thorough evaluation with mixed methods, along with policy and practice implications. Key adult learning issues canvassed include the role of empowerment, adult education and transformative learning. Key findings included that women's self-esteem, emotional intelligence, purpose and mobilisation increased, with the latter evident in vocational outcomes and social connection. Some women expressed interest in facilitating the program*

*for other groups. As one facilitator observed ‘the program really empowers women to tap into their own gifts and talents’. Lessons learned encompassed improvements to the program including sustainable social networks, since for these women purpose in life and mobilisation were intertwined with social connection and helping other women.*

**Keywords:** *community, empowerment, evaluation, personal development, self-esteem, women.*

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## **Introduction**

Gender equity and empowering women are significant international issues. The personal development program analysed here in Australia has international impact and contributes to these issues. The following is organised to touch on women’s empowerment, adult education and program topics of worth, strength and purpose with expected outcomes in mobilisation. The comprehensive mixed method, multi-phase evaluation is explained next. Adult learning’s impact on mobilising women is explored, followed by implications for policy and practice and limitations and future research.

## **Women’s personal development in an international context**

Personal development involves a dynamic process where individuals seek purpose (Wuff, 1996). An underpinning philosophy is the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights: every individual has ‘the right to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms’ (UN, 1948:24). In many parts of the world women are vulnerable (UN, 2004). The UN (2005) Millennium Development Project Goal 3 offers some solutions by promoting empowerment. Employment and business start-up programs empower women and alleviate poverty in developing nations (Kabeer, 2005). In contrast, Australia is relatively wealthy and egalitarian (Banks, 2007), taking in a number of immigrants to form a multicultural society. However, Indigenous Australians are disadvantaged as are various ethnic minorities. Despite Australia’s extensive national welfare, poverty, domestic violence and homelessness

still exist. Australia has vulnerable groups of women, represented in this research. Other more socially advantaged women are also represented but this advantage does not necessarily preclude them from suffering psychosocial issues or benefitting from personal development. Further, even in high income countries such as Australia women suffer gender inequality (Gerecke, 2013).

### **Contested notions of empowerment**

Empowerment is a process of helping individuals to identify as active agents on behalf of themselves and others (Beteta, 2006).

When empowerment for women is addressed, greater meanings and possibilities ensue (Porter, 2013). Developing and mobilising women is a legitimate exercise (Pollack, 2000). Groups can be mobilised, reducing women's isolation by enabling them to develop mutual support. A sense of community confirms women's experience, develops a women-based value system and challenges inequality (Willie, Ridini & Willard, 2008).

However, empowerment is contested in the literature (Cornwall & Anyidoho, 2010; Whiteside, Tsey & Earles, 2011). Empowerment is theorised to consist of three components: intrapersonal, interpersonal and taking action (Bay-Cheng, 2012). An integrated conceptual framework includes individual and collective empowerment and a path towards empowerment which includes, but is not limited to, mobilising (Hyung Hur, 2006). Empowerment is subject to debate in the feminist literature focussing on whether personal (subjective) empowerment is true empowerment, as it is not political and lacks critical social action (Bay-Cheng, 2012; Peterson & Lamb, 2012). This focus on subjective empowerment contrasts with earlier notions of social change (Rappaport, 1987). Empowerment can be achieved by participation in programs such as the one evaluated here. However participation does not guarantee empowerment. Creating a personal feeling of subjective empowerment might not translate to increased power over unequal distribution of resources (Riger 1993). This lack of change in the essential power structures of society may well explain feminists' frustration with the current scenario where women may be more sexualized and less liberated than ever, even though it is believed by some that the work of liberation and empowerment is done (Cornwall & Anyidoho, 2010). This program does not have overt political or feminist

aims but aligns with the tradition of adult education in Australia in that it intends to achieve what Willis (1991: 74) identified as ‘increased self-esteem, empowerment, optimism and hope. It embraces a sense of confidence ... and a desire to collaborate for human betterment’. These values underpin the program.

Riger (1993) argued that empowerment came to be viewed as agency, mastery and control rather than relational connectedness: yet connection is important to empowerment. Still, agency, mastery and control may be useful skills and attitudes in today’s world and the program aims to assist women to develop them through decision making, problem solving and goal setting. A parallel issue is that the term has been co-opted by policy-makers, so that empowerment is managed from on high, losing some of its political, feminist edge (Batliwala, 1994; Kabeer, 1999). Cornwall and Anyidoho (2010:145) offer reasons why this co-option might be the case: ‘its softened edges make “women’s empowerment” eminently more palatable to a broad-based development constituency than the harder talk of “gender equality”’.

Another issue is measurement. There are no agreed measures of empowerment, partly because it is used in many disciplines at different levels of analysis, with varying intent (Narayan, 2005). By definition, it depends on the context (Zimmerman, 1995). Women’s lives are complex, cutting across many different domains and roles (Davies, 1996), where empowerment has different meanings in different contexts. Therefore for this research, empowerment for women may mean different things at varying times in a range of situations and roles. For example, empowerment for women with degree qualifications in full time work would differ from migrant women in ethnic communities or women in domestic violence refuges or detention centres.

### **Personal development and adult education in Australia**

Australia has a long history of adult education for women. Some examples are: goal setting for isolated women (Terry, 1991); communication and assertiveness programs for migrant women (Hughes, 1996); literacy programs for Indigenous Australians such as young mothers or those in correctional facilities (Kildae & Yow Yeh, 2000); literacy and language for Sudanese women (Turner & Tilbury

Fozdar, 2010); refugee mothers (Riggs et al., 2012); and the Clemente Course to empower poor and marginalised women with humanities education (Gervasoni, Smith & Howard, 2013).

### **Adult learning concepts applied to the program**

The program reflects the original values of adult education in achieving social change rather than the instrumental business aims of human resource development that have captured the field in more recent history (Brown, 2010). Transformative learning is a useful concept that engages with notions of empowerment. In transformative learning, individuals change their frames of reference through critically reflecting on the assumptions behind their beliefs, habits of mind and viewpoints (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow's ideas were first developed in the 1970s when he worked with women returning to study or work. His ideas have been well supported (Kitchenham, 2008). Taking these ideas further, feminist educators go beyond consciousness raising at the individual level to what Freire (1972 in Hughes, 1996:103) calls 'conscientisation', which means challenging women to connect what they learn about themselves to the wider context of power structures, with the ultimate aim of achieving social change. However, the program does not have this explicit purpose.

The program embodies some empowerment ideals even if informed by other literature besides feminist pedagogy. The process and content considers the beliefs, values, gender and learned ways of behaving that motivate the group, based on an effective model formulated by Irvin Yalom (Ormont, 1972). This process accords with a cardinal principle of adult learning in eliciting and respecting participants' responses (Brookfield, 1998). The program was designed by professionals and is delivered by a range of facilitators. In this regard it matches Chan's (2009) description of differences in adult education compared to school education where teachers both design and deliver programs. Facilitators have first completed the program as participants and some have formal qualifications in group work. They are carefully selected and trained to deliver the program according to the set curriculum in a formal guide, to maintain the integrity of the program and its aims. However, the program is provided in different situations and facilitators are conscious of where participants are placed. For example, the issues and concerns

raised by women from refugee detention or domestic violence refugees are very different from those addressed by young, educated women in other community contexts.

### **Practical details of how the program is provided**

The program is community based, voluntary and originated in Sydney. Over 2,000 church, community and cultural groups implement the girl's and women's versions in 35 countries, translated into seven languages. The girl's version commenced in 1997 and informed the women's version which was created in 2007, with an estimated 3,000 participants since. The program is free of charge, voluntary and is provided in 90 minute workshops, once a week over seven to eight weeks. The workshops are based on the core topics of worth, strength and purpose and use experiential activities to deliver a message of value. Adult learners have a life centred orientation (Knowles, Holton & Swanston, 2011). This is utilised in the program in that activities are focussed on practical concerns of women. Adult learners are also self-directed (Knowles et al., 2011) although this is less evident in the program in that it has a structured curriculum with set activities to convey the main message. It may well be more didactic than principles of adult learning would recommend.

The program is provided through ice breakers, creative exercises, interactive games, deportment activities, discussions and role plays, with a view to building personal skills, embracing challenging situations rather than avoiding them, persevering through challenges rather than giving up, living an active and engaged life; confidently putting forward personal ideas, thoughts and opinions and exploring self beliefs. Handouts for each session are purposeful, illustrated and depict significant concepts and principles. For example, in a session about emotions, including anger, a small visual prompt illustrates the traffic light concept with the words stop, think and choose in red, orange and green. An aesthetically pleasing environment is created to reinforce the message of value. Refreshments create a friendly, non-threatening social setting.

### **Program content and theoretical underpinnings**

In terms of content, the three foundational topics of worth, strength

and purpose are aligned with interventions to develop healthy self-evaluation by encouraging individuals to value and appreciate themselves (Australian Psychological Society, 2008), with strengths-based learning (Staron, Jasinski & Weatherley, 2006). Hughes (1996) noted the challenge of avoiding a deficit approach to women who choose to engage in personal development which, by virtue of the program title, may imply that women need improving or fixing, even though this is anathema to feminist pedagogy. The program is advertised as a personal development community program with an inspirational, practical and experiential approach to learning, emphasising each women's worth.

In evaluating the program, it was necessary to equate the three topics of worth, strength and purpose with concepts and scales in the literature (Galanou & Priporas, 2009). The underpinning concepts were self-esteem, emotional intelligence and purpose-in-life. A fourth concept of mobilisation was added for this research as a potential outcome. Individuals make fundamental evaluations about their worth and capabilities, including self-esteem, which refers to Maslow's (1959) understanding of value. Women with low self-esteem allow too much of themselves to be negotiable, struggle to care for themselves and experience life as stressful (Rogers, 1994). Strength relates to emotional intelligence or individuals' knowledge of their emotions (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Purpose is defined as 'a stable and generalisable intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self' (Bronk et al., 2009: 503). All of self-esteem, emotional intelligence and purpose contribute to positive life outcomes (Burrow, Sumner & Ong, 2013; Liu, Wang & Lu, 2013; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004; Orth, Robins & Widaman, 2012). A fourth concept, in the research rather than the program, was mobilisation. Similar to thriving, it is a positive state marked by going forward (Quinn, Spreitzer & Brown, 2000). It relates to optimism in taking an active stance in the world rather than being a passive recipient (Seligman, 1995). The goals and strategies of mobilisation fall under the umbrella of empowerment.

## **Evaluation**

Education professionals need to be proactive in evidence-based and

research-informed approaches to practice (Hamlin, 2007). This research used Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2006) four-level evaluation: reaction, learning, behaviour and results. Evaluation beyond reaction is time consuming and labour intensive, but reliable evaluation is essential (Grohmann & Kauffeld, 2013). For community programs, evaluation may be required by funding bodies but obstacles exist to producing effective reports (Treiber et al., 2013). The questions addressed in the research were thus:

1. Who participates and how do they react?
2. What is the impact on learning in terms of self-esteem, purpose and emotional intelligence?
3. What are the implications for mobilisation, including beyond the program?
4. What lessons can be learned for implementing and evaluating programs such as this?

## **Method**

Critical realism underpinned this research, which utilises verifiable statistical information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). However, it is also informed by a feminist standpoint, putting women at the centre. From this perspective, meaning is constructed from the results (Harding, 1991). The method was mixed with a large quantitative core component and a small supplementary qualitative component (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). There were three data collection phases: a pre- and post-test, structured phone interviews and written third-party observations from facilitating organisations. The pre- and post-test were entirely quantitative, interviews were highly structured and predominantly quantitative and third party observations were qualitative. Participants were recruited through community service providers and with flyers in the local area, all in Sydney. Ethics approval was obtained from the relevant research institution.

## **Measures**

The pre- and post-test measured self-esteem, emotional intelligence, purpose and mobilisation. The Rosenberg (1989) Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) measured worth. The Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)

measured appraisal, expression, regulation and utilisation of emotion (Schutte et al., 1998). Ten EIS items were chosen to match the strength concept. The psychological wellbeing inventory includes a purpose-in-life subscale (Ryff & Singer, 1998) of ten items. A new scale was created for mobilisation with nine items. A five-point Likert scale was used for all measures. Both pre- and post-test collected data about vocational situation. The pre-test included a question about psychosocial issues. The post-test collected immediate post-program reactions. Phone interviews were conducted after three to six months, with a structured schedule. Responses were organised around the program concepts. Third-party written observations were gathered from six organisations.

The total number of women starting the program was 500. Of these, 61.0 per cent completed the pre-test. Within this a matched sample of 161 completed the post-test (52.8 per cent). Reliability was established with Cronbach's alpha (Sekaran, 2003), with the acceptable level being 0.7 (Manning & Munro, 2007). Cronbach's alpha for self-esteem ( $r=0.86$ ), purpose ( $r=0.81$ ) and mobilisation ( $r=0.85$ ) represented good reliability. For emotional intelligence reliability was lower ( $r=0.69$ ), but possibly acceptable (Birks, McKendree & Watt, 2009).

## Results

In terms of who participated, the largest group were from the church (60.2 per cent), with the rest from different community groups such as a domestic violence refuge, a refugee detention center and an Arabic community group (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Groups ( $n=161$ )

Source	n	%
Church	97	60.25
Domestic violence refuge	20	12.42
Urban care	11	6.83
Indian group	10	6.21
Chinese group	10	6.21
Arabic group	7	4.35
Refugee detention centre	6	3.73

For age, the highest numbers were in their twenties (43.4 per cent), followed by 31 to 40 years (28.5 per cent). For marital status, 75.2 per cent were not with a partner. Around half had university degrees (51.6 per cent). According to the question about previous history of psychosocial issues, 28.0 per cent recorded psychosocial issues, including sexual abuse (5.0 per cent), depression (4.3 per cent), domestic violence (3.7 per cent), substance abuse (3.1 per cent), other mental illness (2.5 per cent) and other (9.3 per cent). Thus a picture emerged of a typical participant from a church group, 20 to 30 years old, single, with a university degree. Some may have experienced previous psychosocial issues but they would still be considered advantaged in terms of qualifications and social connection. On the other hand, other cohorts had relatively low qualifications and came from diverse groups including English not being the first language and in detention. To test these differences, participants from non-church groups were combined into one and compared with the church group. A chi-square test showed differences between the groups on education ( $\chi^2 = 12.53, df = 4, p < 0.014$ ), with more university qualifications in the church group and more trade and technical qualifications in the non-church group. A one-way analysis of variance found that the church group was higher on purpose ( $F(1,303) = 19.25, p < 0.000$ ) and mobilisation ( $F(1,303) = 23.95, p < 0.000$ ).

The next question was participants' reactions. Mean scores ranged from 3.51 for time spent on each topic to 4.09 for facilitators. Given that all scores were above the midpoint, program delivery was deemed effective. The second research question was learning, where differences in self-esteem, purpose, emotional intelligence and mobilisation for the matched sample were measured (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Self-esteem (SE), emotional intelligence (EI), purpose and mobilisation for pre- and post-test ( $n = 161$ )

	SE 1	SE 2	EI 1	EI 2	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Mobilisation 1	Mobilisation 2
Mean	35.04	39.40	34.55	37.07	28.35	31.41	31.22	33.56
SD	6.51	5.29	5.15	5.36	5.55	4.66	5.69	5.83
Median	35.00	39.40	35.00	38.00	28.35	31.41	32.00	33.55
Skew	-0.251	-0.291	-0.457	-0.638	-0.154	-0.426	-0.200	-0.383

% change		12.60		8.60		10.80		4.80
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All of self-esteem, purpose, emotional intelligence and mobilisation improved with the largest gains being in self-esteem and purpose. The Wilcoxon signed-ranks test was used to test these differences, due to skew and kurtosis (Manning & Munro, 2007). Self-esteem (median = 39.40,  $z = -8.34$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), emotional intelligence (median = 38,  $z = -5.44$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), purpose (median = 31.41,  $z = -6.72$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) and mobilisation (median = 33.55,  $z = -5.72$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) all significantly increased.

Mobilisation was apparent in other ways. There was task-focused mobilisation in changes to vocational situation such as taking up further study or gaining employment. The post-test showed 32.0 per cent in training or studying which was 5.9 per cent higher. Unemployed or seeking work decreased (down to 3.9 per cent from 6.8 per cent). The interviews also provided evidence for task-focussed mobilisation where 21 of 53 (39.6 per cent) reported moving into study or work. Of note was that six (11.3 per cent) started their own business. Interviews also featured social connection, with 15 (28.3 per cent) mentioning a desire to help other women, sharing the message of value with others and taking the program into other groups. Community integration and avenues for social interaction were noted, for example:

*It confirmed and encouraged my desire to help other women, I would love to take the program to the Arabic community, I want to share the message with other women because it has impacted me so much.*

*I have an awareness of possibilities and have established a relationship with other women who are vulnerable in life.*

In terms of up-skilling, 47 interviewees (88.7 per cent) recognised that new skills were learnt, including, for example:

*I learnt patience and how to react to others; seeing the value in others regardless of circumstance or appearance; implementing healthy boundaries; self-awareness; confront difficult situation instead of ignoring it.*

Regarding observations from family or peers, 36 (67.9 per cent) reported others noticing changes. Interview comments also revealed (as a percentage of 73 comments): agency for self-initiated change (30.1 per cent), worth and value (28.8 per cent), confidence (17.8 per cent), self-awareness (15.1 per cent) and goal setting and purpose (8.2 per cent). Third-party observations supported these findings with participants acquiring a variety of skills in helping with anger issues, self-care and creating a happier family environment. For example one facilitator observed:

*Some powerful testimonies came out of the groups with women discovering a new found sense of hope and purpose for their lives and the lives of their families.*

Another facilitator commented on healing:

*I feel greatly blessed to be equipped to facilitate such a powerful message of hope, empowerment and long term healing to some of the most vulnerable women in our society.*

There was a ‘ripple effect’ for participants and their relationships with others. Participants who originally felt disempowered went on to undertake further studies or to seek employment. For example another facilitator comment was:

*... the program really empowers women to tap into their own gifts and talents. The program equips and skills women to tackle self-doubt through offering them strategies to address and identify past behaviours and unhealthy beliefs that hinder them from reaching their goals and dreams for the future.*

## **Discussion**

The program was effective, with women gaining self-esteem, emotional intelligence and purpose as contributors to mobilisation. Different groups benefited including the educated and purposive along with the vulnerable including domestic violence, minority ethnic groups and those in detention. There was high satisfaction with delivery, content and facilitators. The social aspects of mobilisation were evident, including the intent to be trained as facilitators and continuing to

meet in groups. There was improvement in task mobilisation towards training, employment and business start-ups.

### **Implications for women's development**

The research is significant in linking academic work with policy and practice (Treiber et al., 2013) including for government and community service organisations locally and internationally, as the program is provided in numerous countries. Adult education in personal development can be subject to evidence-based evaluation. This contributes useful knowledge for governments who rely on community groups to deliver services (Sheppard, Fitzgerald & Gonski, 2001).

Community service providers assisting the unemployed to find work could incorporate education such as this to prepare women for vocational training and employment, if low self-esteem, lack of purpose and limited social connection inhibit them. Rainey (2006) noted the need for a strong relational focus in assisting the unemployed. Social connection might alleviate depression, loneliness and lack of peer support (Willie et al., 2008). For this program, there are opportunities to partner with community service providers in vulnerable communities with chronic social issues, such as Indigenous Australians in remote and regional towns desperate for rehabilitation.

Taking into account broader social ecology (Weinstein & Shuck, 2011), women's development does not occur in isolation from other women or context. Women indicating a desire to help others is a sign of their capacity (Varkey, Qureshi & Lesnick, 2010). This is evidence of the relational aspects of women's empowerment (Pollack, 2000) and supports building a healthy community for an active citizen base (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006; Varkey et al., 2010). This women's program and the girl's version operate internationally and therefore may contribute to international goals for female empowerment (UN, 2005).

In terms of program topics and theoretical underpinnings, worth seemed to be a good fit with self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1989). Strength needs to be related more closely to emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) in terms of identifying and managing individual's and others' emotions. Purpose was a close fit with purpose-in-life (Ryff & Singer, 1998). Mobilisation was conceptualised and observed in both 'soft'

social connection and ‘hard’ utilitarian modes. Justifying investment in women’s development programs to neo-liberal governments may need more emphasis on hard mobilisation (McRobbie, 2011) or in this case, vocational outcomes.

### **Implications for evidence-based practice in adult learning evaluation**

Turning next to implications for evaluation, the research confirmed Collins’ (2011) observation about the messy reality of practice in that not every woman persisted with the program, around one in four experienced psychosocial issues and some were in detention and therefore constrained by circumstances that limited mobilisation. As Pollack (2000) noted, creating social connection is time consuming. The present research concurs with Treiber et al. (2013) that conducting effective evaluation is difficult. It required substantial resources, women were not obliged to continue and afterwards were not available for follow up in the same way as participants in workplace learning (Benseman, 2013) or formal certificate programs (Rainey, 2006). It is also challenging to evaluate tangible, longer term results. As Hughes (1996) notes, it is difficult to measure wider community impact. Learning was evident in improved self-esteem and so on. Short term behaviour changes were noted but the results potentially include wider-reaching measures such as less demand on community services, public health and welfare.

### **Implications for adult learning**

Further development of the program could focus on learning transfer. The transfer factors most likely to be viable for community programs are climate, support and follow up (Grossman and Salas, 2011). In terms of support, the finding that some women were self organising into groups after the program is particularly salient to sustained outcomes. There is a double positive impact of social connection in its own right and to reinforce transfer (Van den Bossche, Segers & Jansen, 2010). Further, social connection captures the potential for social change inherent in notions of empowerment (Hyung Hur, 2006) and adult learning (Brown, 2010).

Rigorous evaluation of the type utilised here could be automatically built into programs in order that evaluation beyond the ‘happy sheet’

reaction becomes routine. Pre- and post-testing should be included in every program. Regarding longer-term follow up, groups enabling social connection beyond the workshops could be used to gather data about subsequent changes in women's lives. Social networking sites might prove useful here.

### **Limitations and further research**

As with all research there are opportunities for improvement and further investigation. An experimental design with random assignment to intervention and control groups (Neuman, 2011) or Solomon four group design (Clark & Shadish, 2008) could be utilised. The method relied on self-reports, although triangulation was partially achieved with third-party observations and asking whether participants' significant others had noticed changes. Ideally, 360 degree feedback would be deployed (Brown, McCracken & Hillier, 2013). In-depth, face-to-face interviews would add richness with detailed stories of women's personal learning journeys. One voice that could be heard more in this research is the facilitators', particularly in view of Brookfield's (1995) ideas about critically reflective teachers. That is, that facilitators should review their practice and critically consider the influence of assumptions from their history as learners, as well as through the eyes of participants, colleagues and the literature.

Being conducted in one city means that results may not generalise elsewhere. One of the most disadvantaged groups in Australia is Indigenous Australian women (Banks, 2007). They were not specifically investigated in this research but programs such as this may prove beneficial, with appropriate cultural adaptations (Whiteside et al., 2011).

### **Conclusion**

The program was well received. Increases in all of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, purpose and mobilisation were evident. Women connecting socially in a purposeful group environment, steered by a carefully selected and trained facilitator, experienced positive change. Greater investment in community networks that support social connection and mobilisation seem indicated. Implications and contributions include the complexity of conducting and evaluating live community education and a thorough evaluation using mixed methods.

Policy and practice implications for governments and community service providers locally and internationally include mobilising women to achieve training, employment, better family relationships and other positive outcomes. Program improvements include enhanced focus on emotional intelligence, along with facilitating learning transfer through self-organising groups. More attention might be given to results from a utilitarian perspective for funding and accreditation purposes, but overall, evidence from this research indicates that adult education plays a role in mobilising women for social connection and purposive outcomes that may serve to address the global issue of empowering women.

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