

# Andragogy As A Catalyst For Psychological Flourishing: Towards A Theoretical Framework Linking Adult Learning Practices And Mental Well-Being

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**Abstract:** *The present paper advances a conceptual framework that positions andragogy as a catalyst for psychological flourishing among adult learners. Building upon Knowles' assumptions of adult learning, the paper integrates eudaimonic models of well-being (Ryff), the mental health continuum (Keyes), and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci) to argue that andragogical practices extend beyond cognitive development to shape psychosocial outcomes. The review highlights four central dimensions of andragogy—autonomy, experiential learning, problem-centered orientation, and intrinsic motivation—and demonstrates how these maps onto determinants of flourishing, including autonomy, resilience, competence, coping, and positive affect. A theoretical framework is proposed in which andragogical practices influence well-being through mediating mechanisms such as self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and social connectedness. By situating adult education within the broader discourse of positive psychology, the paper underscores the role of andragogy in creating learner-centered environments that foster both achievement and mental health. The implications are considered at multiple levels: for adult learners in enhancing resilience and agency; for educators and trainers in designing supportive curricula; for policymakers in embedding lifelong learning and mental health strategies into education systems; and for researchers in validating the framework through empirical, cross-cultural, and longitudinal inquiry. The paper concludes that andragogy, when conceptualized as both an instructional philosophy and a psychosocial intervention, holds significant potential to contribute to twenty-first century agendas of lifelong learning, mental health promotion, and human flourishing.*

**Keywords:** *Andragogy; Adult Learning; Psychological Flourishing; Mental Well-Being; Self-Directed Learning; Self-Efficacy; Self-Determination Theory*

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## INTRODUCTION

Adult education has increasingly been recognized as a transformative process that extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills to encompass holistic human development, including psychosocial thriving. In contrast to pedagogy, which traditionally refers to the teaching of children, andragogy emphasizes learner autonomy, the use of prior experience, self-direction, and problem-centered approaches tailored to adult needs (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). This orientation acknowledges that adult learners bring with them diverse experiences, motivations, and responsibilities, requiring approaches that are both flexible and meaningful. The principles of andragogy resonate strongly with contemporary shifts toward lifelong learning, professional development, and personal growth, where education is positioned not only as a means to achieve employability but also as a catalyst for well-being (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Malcolm Knowles' foundational articulation of andragogy as the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980) highlighted key assumptions such as the learner's self-concept as autonomous, the importance of leveraging prior experience, readiness to learn based on life roles, and a preference for problem-centered learning. These assumptions remain central to adult education research and practice, but they also intersect significantly with constructs of psychological well-being, which emphasize autonomy, mastery, resilience, and personal growth (Ryff, 1995; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This convergence suggests that andragogical practices may do more than foster cognitive outcomes—they may also contribute directly to adult learners' psychological flourishing.

In parallel, scholarship on mental well-being has expanded considerably, emphasizing positive psychology approaches that focus on optimal functioning rather than merely the absence of pathology. Ryff's model of psychological well-being proposed six eudaimonic dimensions: autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and personal growth (Ryff, 2014). Similarly, Keyes (2002, 2007) advanced the mental health continuum model, distinguishing between languishing, moderate mental health, and flourishing. These perspectives converge on the idea that well-being involves a combination of emotional, psychological, and social functioning. Notably, these dimensions overlap significantly with the principles of andragogy, particularly in fostering autonomy, purpose, and growth, highlighting the importance of situating adult education within a broader psychosocial framework.

Recent empirical studies also reinforce these linkages. Adult participation in education has been associated with improved self-confidence, resilience, and social connectedness (Field, 2009). Reviews of adult learning outcomes show positive associations with life satisfaction and subjective well-being, even though findings vary by context and design (Feinstein & Hammond, 2004; Waller, 2018). Policy reports from organizations such as the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2012) and What Works Wellbeing (2017) similarly highlight the role of adult education in enhancing social capital, civic participation, and health-related quality of life. These findings collectively underscore the broader significance of adult learning as a psychosocial intervention, not just a means of knowledge acquisition.

### **Rationale for Linking Andragogy with Mental Well-Being**

The rationale for explicitly linking andragogy with mental well-being rests on their theoretical and practical overlaps. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a compelling lens for integration. SDT posits that human flourishing depends on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Andragogical practices, by design, support these needs. For example, learner autonomy is reinforced when adults are allowed to make choices about their learning trajectory, while experiential and problem-centered approaches enhance competence by enabling learners to master real-life challenges. Collaborative, dialogue-based learning further cultivates relatedness, thereby satisfying SDT's triadic needs and supporting psychological flourishing.

Self-directed learning readiness, a construct central to andragogy, also parallels well-being outcomes. Instruments such as the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (Guglielmino, 1977) and the PRO-SDLS (Stockdale & Brockett, 2011) measure capacities for self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and responsibility—qualities associated with resilience, mastery, and life satisfaction. Studies show that higher self-directed learning readiness predicts greater adaptability and purpose, which are essential components of flourishing (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Thus, the cultivation of self-directedness in adult learners may act as a pathway to psychological well-being. Another rationale emerges from the alignment between problem-centered learning and coping mechanisms. Knowles emphasized that adult learning is most effective when oriented toward solving immediate, real-world problems (Knowles, 1980). This orientation not only enhances cognitive engagement but also equips learners with transferable problem-solving skills, a factor associated with coping efficacy and resilience (Hung, Jonassen, & Liu, 2008). Given the complexities adults face—balancing work, family, and community roles—such coping capacities are directly linked to reduced stress and enhanced mental well-being. Additionally, the intrinsic motivation emphasized in andragogy overlaps with constructs in positive psychology that link motivation to vitality and happiness. Research shows that intrinsic motivation is positively associated with engagement, creativity, and subjective well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Kusrkar et al., 2012). By fostering motivation rooted in personal meaning, andragogical environments may thus enhance not only academic achievement but also psychological flourishing.

From a societal perspective, linking andragogy with well-being has implications for workforce development and lifelong learning agendas. Lifelong learning is increasingly recognized as vital for adapting to technological change, but equally, it serves as a mechanism for sustaining mental health across the life course (Jarvis, 2004; Illeris, 2018). Policy frameworks from UNESCO (2016) and the OECD advocate for adult education as a driver of both employability and well-being, underscoring the timeliness of situating andragogy within a psychosocial framework.

## Objectives

Against this backdrop, the aim of the present paper is –

1. To articulate a theoretical framework that conceptualizes andragogy as a catalyst for psychological flourishing among adult learners.
2. To review and integrate foundational theories of andragogy (Knowles), psychological well-being (Ryff), flourishing (Keyes), and motivation (Self-Determination Theory).
3. To examine the intersections between adult learning practices—such as autonomy, experiential learning, and intrinsic motivation—and psychological well-being outcomes.
4. To propose a conceptual model identifying mediating mechanisms (self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and social connectedness) that explain how andragogical practices contribute to flourishing.
5. To analyze implications of the proposed framework for educators, trainers, policymakers, and researchers in adult education and lifelong learning contexts

## Theoretical Foundations of Andragogy

Theoretical discussions of adult learning have consistently emphasized the distinctiveness of andragogy, a term that Malcolm Knowles popularized in the late 1960s as a way to separate the teaching of children (pedagogy) from the education of adults. Andragogy is not simply a set of methods but a coherent orientation to learning that assumes adults bring a qualitatively different orientation to the classroom. Knowles (1968, 1980) initially framed andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn,” suggesting that adult learners are more self-directed, problem-focused, and motivated by internal drives than by external authority. His later formulations positioned andragogy as both a set of assumptions about adult learners and as a practical model for designing learning experiences (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). This conceptual move marked a historical turning point, shifting adult education away from deficit models of training toward learner-centered perspectives that continue to shape research and practice.

Historically, the roots of andragogy can be traced beyond Knowles to European scholars such as Alexander Kapp, who first used the term in 1833 in the context of Platonic education, and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, who revisited it in the twentieth century (Henschke, 2009). Knowles, however, was responsible for mainstreaming the idea in North America and embedding it into human resource development. His six key assumptions about adult learners—need to know, self-concept, role of experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation—became a canonical framework, frequently tested and adapted across diverse cultural contexts (Brookfield, 1986; Merriam, 2001). Later critiques argued that these principles were not universally adult-specific, but the model nonetheless provided a conceptual vocabulary for examining how learning environments can either constrain or support autonomy and relevance. Research in professional and continuing education programs has validated these assumptions, showing that adults typically value opportunities for choice, contextual application, and recognition of prior experience (Holton *et al.*, 2001; Cercone, 2008).

The core principles of andragogy emphasize that adults need to understand why they are learning something before they commit effort; they perceive themselves as responsible agents, with a self-concept rooted in independence; they bring a reservoir of experiences that form a resource for learning; they are most ready to learn when they perceive immediate relevance to social or professional roles; their orientation is toward life problems rather than abstract subjects; and their motivation tends to be intrinsic rather than extrinsic (Knowles *et al.*, 2015). These assumptions have been foundational in shaping learner-centered pedagogy in higher education and workplace training. Empirical studies have reinforced that andragogical approaches increase engagement, retention, and perceived satisfaction in adult learning contexts (Blaschke, 2012; Chan, 2010). The emphasis on experience as a learning resource also links andragogy to experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), underscoring its integrative potential.

Contemporary perspectives on andragogy have expanded significantly in response to digital transformations, globalization, and the growing demand for lifelong learning. With the rise of online and blended modalities, scholars have examined the ways in which digital environments either support or undermine andragogical assumptions. Blaschke (2012) proposed the concept of “heutagogy,” or self-determined learning, as an extension of andragogy particularly suited for e-learning environments, where autonomy and flexibility are paramount. Digital andragogy emphasizes learner control over pacing, sequencing, and resource selection, aligning with Knowles’ emphasis on autonomy but enhanced by technology-enabled personalization (Kimmons, 2020). Massive

open online courses (MOOCs) and micro-learning modules illustrate these developments, offering adults opportunities to curate their own learning pathways.

The discourse of lifelong learning has also reshaped understandings of andragogy. Whereas Knowles primarily focused on structured educational programs, contemporary scholarship situates adult learning within the broader context of lifelong adaptation in rapidly changing economies and societies (*Jarvis, 2004; Illeris, 2018*). International policy bodies such as UNESCO and the OECD have promoted lifelong learning as essential for employability, social cohesion, and well-being, extending the reach of andragogical principles into civic and workplace arenas. Within this frame, andragogy is not limited to classroom techniques but is embedded in social systems that enable adults to continuously reskill and upskill.

Micro-credentials represent another contemporary manifestation of andragogy's evolution. These short, competency-based certifications allow adults to acquire targeted skills aligned with workforce needs while exercising agency in tailoring their learning journeys. Research suggests that micro-credentials appeal to adult learners precisely because they embody andragogical principles: they are problem-centered, immediately applicable, and responsive to learners' intrinsic motivations for career growth and personal development (*Gallagher, 2019*). Digital badges and stackable credentials further empower learners to construct personalized portfolios of achievement, reinforcing self-direction and lifelong adaptability.

In sum, the theoretical foundations of andragogy have grown from Knowles' original articulation into a multifaceted framework that continues to evolve in response to technological innovation and societal change. Its historical evolution demonstrates continuity in emphasizing autonomy, experience, and relevance, while contemporary perspectives illustrate its adaptability in contexts such as digital andragogy, lifelong learning, and micro-credentials. This trajectory underscores andragogy's enduring value not only as a theory of adult learning but also as a catalyst for broader psychological and social outcomes.

### **Conceptualizing Mental Well-Being and Psychological Flourishing**

The discourse on mental health has gradually evolved from a pathology-oriented perspective to one that emphasizes optimal functioning and flourishing. Traditionally, mental health was defined narrowly as the absence of mental illness or psychiatric disorder. The World Health Organization (1948), however, provided an early reorientation by defining health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being rather than merely the absence of disease. This distinction laid the groundwork for later differentiation between mental health and mental well-being. While mental health refers to a broad state encompassing the absence of clinical conditions, mental well-being emphasizes positive attributes such as life satisfaction, purpose, resilience, and psychological growth (*Dodge et al., 2012*). Scholars argue that conflating the two diminishes the richness of human experience, since individuals can be free of psychiatric symptoms yet still lack vitality or meaning in their lives (*Huppert & So, 2013*). Thus, contemporary frameworks focus on mental well-being as a multidimensional construct that captures how individuals function psychologically and socially, not merely whether they are ill.

One of the most influential conceptualizations of mental well-being is Carol Ryff's psychological well-being model, which articulates six dimensions of optimal functioning: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (*Ryff, 1995; Ryff & Keyes, 1995*). This eudaimonic perspective situates well-being as living in accordance with one's true self and realizing one's potential rather than merely experiencing pleasure. Each dimension has relevance for learning contexts: autonomy aligns with learner self-direction, environmental mastery reflects the capacity to manage new challenges, and personal growth resonates with lifelong learning trajectories. Ryff's model has been widely validated across cultures and age groups, demonstrating internal consistency and predictive power for health, resilience, and life satisfaction (*Ryff, 2014*).

Building upon Ryff, Corey Keyes (2002) proposed the mental health continuum, which distinguishes between languishing, moderate mental health, and flourishing. In this view, flourishing represents the presence of high levels of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. Keyes' model is significant because it emphasizes that mental well-being is not binary but exists on a spectrum, with flourishing positioned as the ideal state of thriving. Importantly, Keyes argued that the absence of mental illness does not automatically imply flourishing; one can be free of depression yet feel disengaged or purposeless. Empirical evidence from population studies confirms that flourishing individuals demonstrate higher productivity, stronger social ties, and greater resilience to stress (*Keyes, 2007*). This approach underscores the need for educational environments that not only reduce anxiety or stress but also actively cultivate positive functioning and engagement.

The relevance of these frameworks to adult education is increasingly recognized. Adult learners frequently face complex demands, balancing work, family, and study, which can undermine mental well-being if learning environments are rigid or deficit-focused (Boulton-Lewis, 2010). Conversely, programs that embed andragogical principles—respect for autonomy, recognition of prior experience, problem-centered approaches, and intrinsic motivation—mirror the core elements of psychological well-being and flourishing. For instance, autonomy-supportive teaching aligns with Ryff's autonomy dimension; collaborative problem-solving resonates with positive relations and environmental mastery; and opportunities for lifelong skill development embody personal growth. Research shows that adult learning participation is associated with improvements in self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and resilience, suggesting that education can act as a protective factor for well-being (Feinstein & Hammond, 2004; Field, 2009). Furthermore, the lifelong learning agenda advanced by organizations such as UNESCO positions adult education not only as an economic necessity but also as a route to empowerment, inclusion, and well-being (UNESCO, 2016).

Taken together, the conceptualization of mental well-being and flourishing through the lenses of Ryff and Keyes provides a robust theoretical foundation for linking andragogical practices to positive psychological outcomes. By recognizing well-being as a spectrum and emphasizing dimensions beyond symptom absence, these models make visible the potential for adult learning environments to foster thriving individuals. In this sense, adult education is not simply about cognitive skill acquisition but about cultivating learners' capacity to flourish in complex social and professional worlds.

### **Linkages Between Andragogical Practices and Mental Well-Being**

The potential of andragogical practices to foster mental well-being has been increasingly acknowledged in both educational and psychological literature. Central to this relationship is the alignment between the assumptions of andragogy and the dimensions of psychological flourishing. Knowles' (1980) emphasis on autonomy, experiential learning, problem-centered orientation, and intrinsic motivation resonates strongly with well-being models that highlight autonomy, competence, resilience, and positive affect (Ryff, 1995; Keyes, 2002). These conceptual intersections provide fertile ground for theorizing how adult learning environments can catalyze psychological flourishing by shaping learners' cognitive, emotional, and social resources.

A first point of convergence lies in the relationship between autonomy and self-concept in andragogy and the broader psychological constructs of autonomy and mastery. Knowles argued that adults perceive themselves as self-directing beings, responsible for their own decisions (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). This principle directly parallels Ryff's (2014) conceptualization of autonomy as an essential dimension of well-being, where individuals feel capable of regulating their lives and resisting external pressures. Empirical research supports the claim that autonomy-supportive teaching enhances self-efficacy, agency, and psychological adjustment in adult learners (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Reeve, 2012). When educators design environments that allow choice, respect prior experience, and encourage learner decision-making, they foster mastery—a sense of competence in navigating challenges—that serves as a buffer against stress and enhances well-being (Niemi & Ryan, 2009).

The second linkage concerns experiential learning and its contribution to resilience and competence. Adults bring a reservoir of life experiences to educational settings, which andragogy treats as valuable resources. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory emphasizes that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, a process that enhances adaptability. Resilience, defined as the ability to recover from adversity, is reinforced when learners integrate past experiences into new problem contexts, thereby strengthening competence and self-efficacy (Masten, 2014). Studies in adult professional training confirm that experiential, practice-based activities improve not only skill acquisition but also emotional resilience and adaptability in the workplace (Boulton-Lewis, 2010; Illeris, 2018). Thus, the experiential emphasis in andragogy nurtures psychological resources that contribute to both effective functioning and mental well-being.

A third critical link is between problem-centered orientation and the development of coping strategies and problem-solving skills. Knowles suggested that adults learn best when instruction is oriented toward solving real-life challenges rather than mastering abstract content. This practical orientation aligns with Keyes' (2007) conception of flourishing, which includes effective functioning in daily life. Research demonstrates that problem-based learning enhances coping efficacy by teaching learners systematic strategies for analyzing and responding to stressors (Hung, Jonassen, & Liu, 2008). In adult education, problem-centered approaches have been shown to increase confidence in handling personal and professional difficulties, which translates into greater

psychological resilience and reduced anxiety (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). By embedding learning in authentic tasks, andragogical practice thus strengthens coping resources that underpin mental well-being.

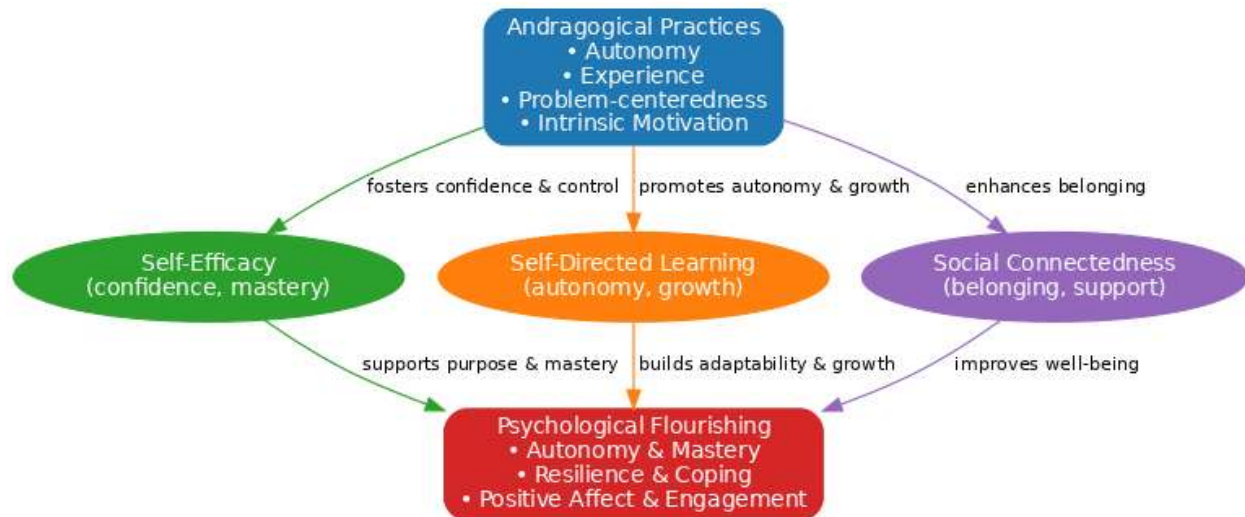
Finally, intrinsic motivation—a cornerstone of andragogy—is tightly connected with positive affect and sustained engagement. Adults are motivated to learn when the content is relevant to their lives and when they perceive internal value in learning activities. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) posits that intrinsic motivation arises from the fulfillment of basic psychological needs and is associated with vitality, creativity, and well-being. Empirical studies indicate that intrinsically motivated adult learners report higher levels of enjoyment, engagement, and satisfaction, which contribute to positive emotional states and sustained mental health (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Kusurkar et al., 2012). Andragogical strategies that cultivate intrinsic motivation—such as connecting tasks to learners' goals, providing meaningful feedback, and allowing choice—thus enhance both learning and psychological flourishing.

In synthesis, the four pillars of andragogy—autonomy, experiential learning, problem-centered orientation, and intrinsic motivation—map onto well-established determinants of psychological well-being, including autonomy, mastery, resilience, coping, and positive affect. These theoretical linkages, supported by empirical evidence across education and psychology, suggest that andragogical practices have transformative potential not only for skill development but also for cultivating flourishing adult learners. By intentionally aligning instructional practices with psychological needs, educators can create environments where learning and well-being are mutually reinforcing processes.

### PROPOSED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical integration of andragogy with psychological flourishing requires a structured framework that articulates the mechanisms through which adult learning practices contribute to mental well-being. Building on Knowles' (1980) assumptions of adult learning and drawing from Ryff's (1995) model of psychological well-being and Keyes' (2002) continuum of flourishing, the proposed framework conceptualizes andragogy as an upstream determinant that activates a series of mediating processes—self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and social connectedness—that in turn lead to enhanced well-being outcomes. This model positions adult education not only as a site of cognitive growth but also as a psychosocial system that fosters resilience, meaning, and vitality. At the center of this framework lies the principle that andragogical practices are autonomy-supportive, experiential, problem-centered, and intrinsically motivating (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). These practices cultivate self-efficacy, or the belief in one's capacity to perform tasks, which Bandura (1997) identified as a key predictor of motivation and psychological adjustment. In adult education, learners who perceive mastery through experiential activities report higher self-confidence and lower psychological distress (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Thus, self-efficacy operates as a mediator linking autonomy-supportive instruction to well-being outcomes such as purpose and environmental mastery.

A second pathway involves self-directed learning (SDL), long recognized as a hallmark of adult education. SDL reflects learners' capacity to set goals, monitor progress, and regulate strategies, which aligns with Ryff's autonomy and personal growth dimensions (Garrison, 1997; Stockdale & Brockett, 2011). Empirical studies show that SDL readiness is positively correlated with life satisfaction and adaptability, suggesting that it mediates the relationship between learner-centered practices and flourishing (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Within the framework, SDL acts as a cognitive-behavioral mediator through which adults translate educational autonomy into enduring psychological resources. The third mediator is social connectedness, a construct emphasized by Keyes (2007) as integral to social well-being. Andragogical practices that promote collaborative learning, peer dialogue, and problem-based group tasks foster belongingness and social support, which have been consistently linked to positive affect and lower depression (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Social connectedness thus explains how problem-centered, collaborative practices contribute to flourishing by strengthening relational bonds.



Together, these pathways create a dynamic system: andragogical practices → mediators (self-efficacy, SDL, social connectedness) → psychological flourishing (autonomy, mastery, resilience, positive affect). The framework implies that mental well-being in adult learners is not a by-product but an intentional outcome of education designed around andragogical principles. Future empirical studies can validate these relationships through quantitative models such as structural equation modeling, thereby testing the robustness of this theoretical proposition.

### Implications of the Proposed Framework

The implications of linking andragogical practices with psychological flourishing extend across multiple educational and societal domains. For adult learners, the framework underscores the importance of learning designs that enhance autonomy, self-efficacy, and resilience. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2015) argued that adult learners thrive when their self-concept as autonomous individuals are respected. Empirical evidence demonstrates that autonomy-supportive learning fosters self-efficacy, which is critical for coping with stress and maintaining mental health (Bandura, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 2017). By engaging in experiential, problem-centered tasks, adult learners develop resilience—defined as adaptability in the face of challenges—which contributes to sustained well-being (Masten, 2014).

For educators and trainers, the implication is to design curricula and instructional strategies that are not only content-rich but also psychologically supportive. Incorporating experiential activities, collaborative learning, and self-directed projects aligns with adult learners' needs and has been shown to improve engagement and satisfaction (Blaschke, 2012; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). In practice, this means shifting from teacher-centered approaches to facilitative roles, where educators act as guides who cultivate competence and intrinsic motivation. For policy makers, the framework suggests embedding lifelong learning policies that integrate mental health considerations into adult education. UNESCO (2016) emphasizes lifelong learning as essential for sustainable development, and scholars have highlighted that participation in adult education enhances social capital and well-being (Field, 2009). Policies that promote micro-credentials, flexible pathways, and inclusive adult education programs can simultaneously advance employability and psychological flourishing.

For researchers, the model identifies the need for empirical validation through cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, using instruments such as the PRO-SDLS for self-directed learning and Ryff's scales for well-being (Stockdale & Brockett, 2011; Ryff, 2014). Cross-cultural studies are particularly crucial, as cultural values shape both educational practices and well-being outcomes. This line of inquiry will strengthen theoretical integration and inform globally relevant practices.

### CONCLUSION

The integration of andragogical principles with psychological flourishing resonates strongly with existing literature that situates adult education as a vehicle for both cognitive and psychosocial growth. Previous studies have consistently shown that adult learning fosters increased self-confidence, social connectedness, and life satisfaction (Field, 2009; Feinstein & Hammond, 2004). This framework extends those findings by clarifying how

specific andragogical practices—autonomy, experiential learning, problem-centered orientation, and intrinsic motivation—map onto dimensions of flourishing identified by Ryff (1995) and Keyes (2002). While traditional research has often examined educational outcomes in isolation from well-being, this conceptual model integrates educational psychology with positive psychology, positioning adult learning as a pathway toward resilience, mastery, and meaningful engagement. By linking two robust theoretical traditions, the framework highlights education's capacity to generate not only economic and intellectual returns but also sustainable psychological well-being.

When viewed comparatively, the distinctiveness of andragogy becomes more evident. Pedagogy, with its teacher-centered orientation, emphasizes structured guidance and knowledge transmission, which may be effective for children but often limits autonomy and intrinsic motivation in adults (Knowles et al., 2015). In contrast, heutagogy advances beyond andragogy by stressing self-determined learning in digital and flexible environments (Blaschke, 2012). While heutagogy has relevance in contexts of lifelong online learning, andragogy occupies a central position by balancing structure with learner autonomy, making it particularly suited to adult learners navigating personal and professional roles. This comparative analysis underscores that the strength of andragogy lies in its ability to promote psychological flourishing by providing both direction and freedom, a balance that pedagogy and heutagogy alone cannot fully achieve.

Despite its promise, the proposed framework has limitations. The conceptual linkages, while grounded in theory, require empirical validation through cross-cultural and longitudinal studies. Cultural contexts may influence how autonomy or resilience is perceived, necessitating comparative research designs (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Another limitation is that adult learners are a heterogeneous group, and the framework may not account for all demographic variations. Nonetheless, emerging trends such as micro-credentials, workplace learning, and mental health integration in education create fertile ground for testing these ideas in diverse settings (Gallagher, 2019; UNESCO, 2016). The key argument advanced here is that andragogy is not merely an instructional approach but a catalyst for psychological flourishing, making it central to both theory and practice in adult education. Future research should operationalize mediators like self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and social connectedness using advanced statistical models such as SEM to establish causal pathways. In conclusion, andragogy offers a theoretically rich and practically relevant foundation for designing adult learning environments that foster resilience, purpose, and well-being in an era of lifelong learning.

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