

ABSTRACT

In a context of profound demographic and social change, also marked by a crisis in intergenerational relationships, Active Ageing emerges as a **pedagogical challenge**. This study examines the delicate phase of the transition from working life to retirement, analysing the role of **cultural volunteering** in supporting Active Ageing through the case of Auser, an Italian association for **self-managed services and solidarity**. As an **informal learning** environment, Auser offers older adults meaningful opportunities for **civic participation** during the transition from work to retirement. Drawing on a national survey conducted with 600 volunteers, the research highlights how cultural engagement can foster **lifelong learning** and redefine later life as a phase of agency, growth, and social involvement. The study is grounded in the LifeComp and Life Skills frameworks for life competences, the **GreenComp and Inner Development Goals for sustainability-related values**, and the ISTAT Benessere Equo e Sostenibile (BES) system for **wellbeing** assessment. Findings confirm a positive relationship between associative participation and transformative learning, underscoring the pedagogical role of civic engagement in **promoting key competences** for Active Ageing. The results show that non-formal and informal learning enhance wellbeing, optimism, and community connectedness. Cultural associations thus emerge not only as spaces for participation but as enabling environments for personal and collective development. Nonetheless, the persistence of exclusion affecting certain groups calls for further reflection within the associative sphere.

Keywords: Active Ageing; lifelong learning; cultural volunteering; informal education.

RESEARCH PROCESS

HYPOTHESIS & METHOD

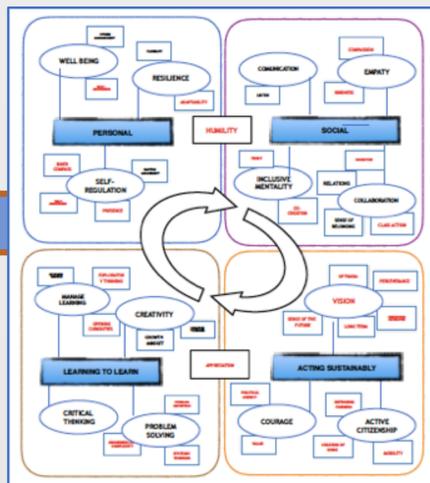
Positive correlation between cultural associationism and **life and sustainability competences** for Active Ageing. Theoretical foundations: **LifeComp, Life Skills, GreenComp, BES**. **Quantitative approach** with an ad hoc questionnaire, validated through a pilot study in cultural associations in the Casentino area. Sample: **600 AUSER volunteers** from across Italy.

LIFE, SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCES AND WELLBEING



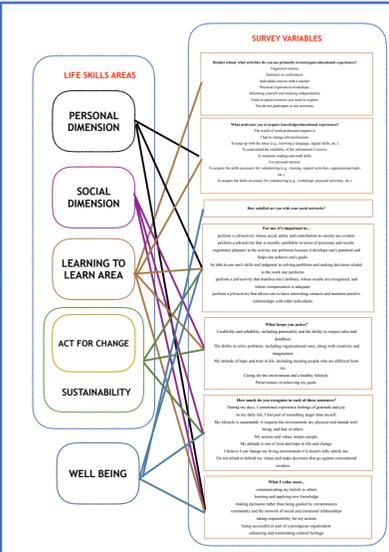
MATRIX OF FRAMEWORK

SKILLS CONSTELLATION



METHOD PILOT CASE STUDY TEST

VARIABLES AND INDICATORS



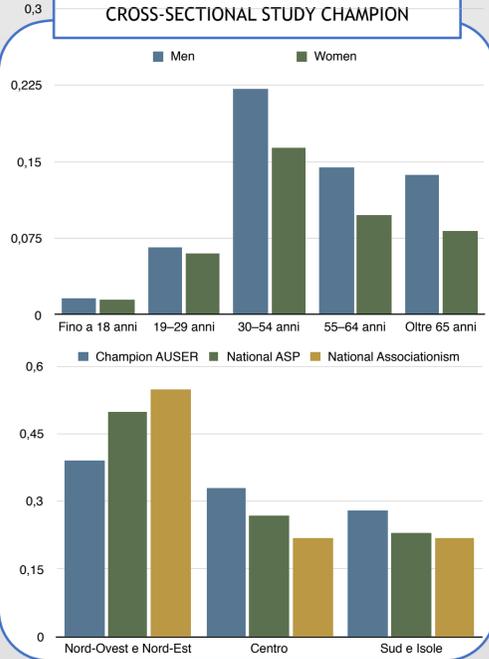
BACK GROUND

Auser, founded in 1989 by CGIL and SPI-CGIL, is an Italian association that promotes Active Ageing by valuing the social role of older adults. With a large and widespread membership and volunteer base, it supports **active citizenship** through initiatives oriented toward **solidarity and intergenerational justice**. The Auser case demonstrates how cultural and social volunteering can generate **significant pedagogical value** in later life, offering older adults meaningful opportunities for active participation.



SOME STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATA EMERGED

CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY CHAMPION



SOCIAL COMPETENCES

Relationality and Empathy
Credibility and Reliability
Inclusive Mindset

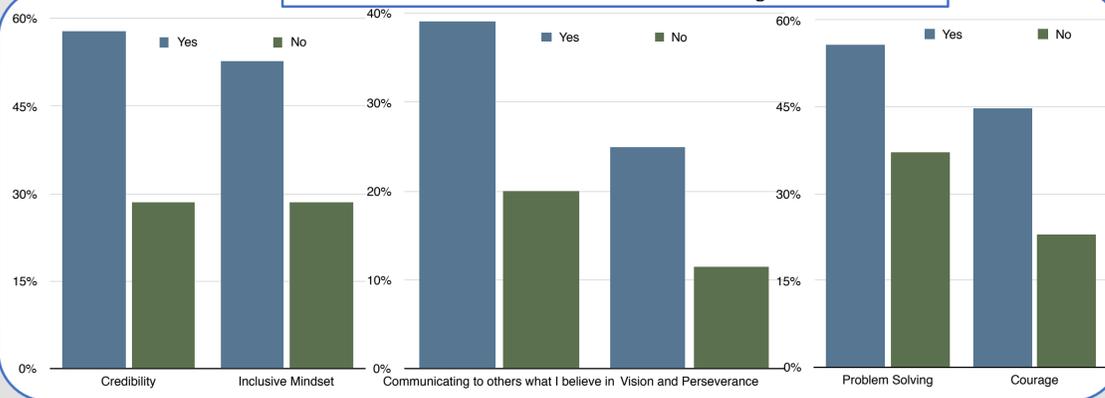
LEARNING-TO-LEARN COMPETENCES

Creativity and Problem-Solving
Openness to Others' Ideas

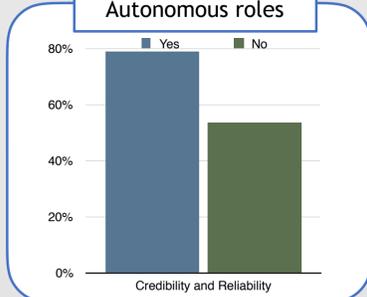
SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCES

Courage and Communicating
What I Believe In
Vision and Perseverance

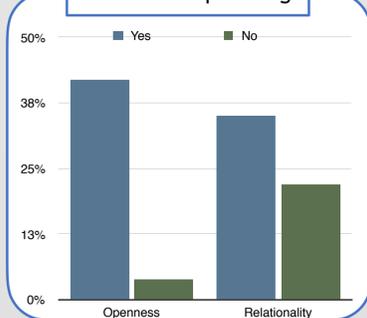
In-formal and non-formal training



Autonomous roles



Retirement planning



DISCUSSION

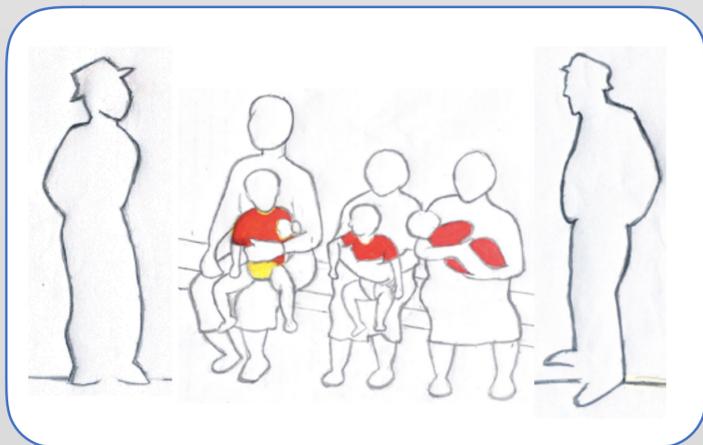
The data appear to confirm the pedagogical effectiveness of cultural associationism as a **tool for empowering individuals and communities**. The transition to retirement emerges as a generative phase in which personal biographies are rewritten in social and relational terms. Competences such as self-efficacy and a positive life orientation can be developed through learning experiences.

A continuum emerges in which competences are not understood as a finite legacy of working life, but as resources to be reactivated and further developed for managing the transition and **throughout the life course**.

A pedagogical perspective enables us to interpret these **trajectories as practices of transformative learning**, capable of counteracting the symbolic marginalisation of old age through **positive narratives** that foster active integration into the social fabric.

Ageing, therefore, does not mark the end of learning, but the beginning of a new phase in which personal growth and meaningful learning continue in a **generative and constructive way** even in advanced age.

Future educational and social policies should formally recognise these contexts as community-based educational agencies, acknowledging the pedagogical role of associationism in building more **equitable and inclusive societies**, including at the intergenerational level.



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