

Functional Impacts of Adult Literacy Programme on Rural Women

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Abstract

This study assessed the functional impacts of adult literacy programme among rural women participants in Ishielu Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study was made up of 115 adult instructors and 2,408 adult learners giving a total of 2,623. The sample consisted of all the 115 adult instructors and 200 rural women enrolled in adult literacy programme, giving a total sample size of 315. The sample was drawn using simple random sampling method. Data were collected using researcher-designed questionnaire made up of nineteen items. Four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree was used to rate the responses of the respondents. Mean was used for data analysis. A mean of 2.50 and above was accepted while any mean less than 2.5 rejected. Two experts in adult education and one expert in measurement and evaluation evaluated the instrument. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using test-retest method. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, a correlation coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. The study revealed among other things, that adult literacy programme in Ishielu L.G.A. of Ebonyi State has functional impacts on the lives of the rural women in the following areas: family life, trades and community development roles. It was recommended that adult education organizers should carry out periodic assessment of the needs of rural women and plan their programmes accordingly.

Keywords: Functional, adult literacy, programme, rural, women

1. Introduction

Literacy which involves the skills of teaching, writing, and computing, is the bedrock of any meaningful development of any country. No nation can develop beyond its literacy level. The human capital resources of a country can function only within the limit of their literacy level. Illiteracy has been recognized as a world problem that hamper development projects especially in developing countries of Africa of which Nigeria is a part. Otagburuagu (2007) noted that a UNESCO human development report shows that between 1970 and 2001, 950 million adults in developing countries were described as illiterates. Portraying the state of literacy in Nigeria, Otagburuagu further stated that out of 120 million Nigerians, more than 60 million people are illiterates.

The high level of illiteracy in Nigeria has been a major source of concern for Nigerian government over the years. Former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo (2000) stated that in spite of the government's efforts of fighting illiteracy; over 50% of Nigerians were illiterates. The President also bemoan the wide gender disparity among the literate citizens of Nigeria stating that 62.5% literate Nigerian are males write only 39.5% are females. The awful illiteracy level in Nigeria especially among the women could have informed the giant stride taken by the president towards the eradication of illiteracy by launching Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999. UBE Programme aims at combating illiteracy among children; youths and adults by providing free and compulsory education. There is high level of school enrollment as a result of the introduction of UBE. There has been high level of sensitization among illiterate adults, especially women on the need to enroll in adult literacy classes.

However, literacy is not acquired for its own sake. It is a means to an end. For adult literacy programme to be meaningful in the lives of the recipients, it has to be functional. According to Offorma (2007), functionality is the ability to transfer knowledge gained from scholarship to solve ones or societal problems. Asiedu and Oyedeji (1985) stated that functional literacy is an intellectual equipment for the individual to enable him/her become not only literate but perform other tasks that are of benefit to him/her and to the society in which he/she lives. Functional literacy is work-oriented, career, or occupation oriented literacy.

Women in Africa countries are generally impoverished, live in servitude and relegated to the background due to illiteracy. Therefore literacy programme for the women should not be limited to just teaching of reading, writing and computing. Adult literacy programme for the women should be functional, treating the women participants in a group context within an environment or occupation with a view to satisfying their collective and individual needs in order to make them functional members of their society. This paper therefore assesses the functionality of Adult Literacy programme of women in rural area as it relates to their roles in family, their trade, and community development.

To guide the study, the following research questions were formulated.

1. What functional impacts has adult literacy programme made on the rural women's family life?
2. What are the functional impacts of adult literacy programme on the rural women's trades?

3. What functional impacts has adult literacy programme made on the rural women in relation to their roles in community development?

2. Method

The design adopted for his study is the descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

The population of the study was made up of all adult learners and instructors in all (28) Adult Education Centers in Ishielu Local Government Area which consisted of one hundred and fifteen (115) Adult instructors and two thousand, four hundred and eight (2408) adult learners.

Simple random sampling technique was used to draw ten (10) Adult Education centers from the entire twenty-eight (28) centers, as well as 200 women participants from the 10 center-twenty (20) women from each of the ten centers. All the one hundred and fifteen instructors were included in the sample due to the smallness of the number of instructors. The sample size was therefore three hundred and fifteen (315).

Instrument for data collection was research-made questionnaire made up of nineteen items. The instrument was made up of two sections-A and B section A was on personal data of the respondents while section B is made up of three clusters each containing items related to each of the research questions respectively. The items were assigned a four-point response scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. These had a corresponding value of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three experts (Lecturers), one in Measurement and Evaluation and two in Adult Education all in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The comments and suggestions made by the experts were used to modify the items on the instruments. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using test-retest method, with time lag of two weeks outside the area of the study. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, a correlation co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained. The researcher administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of three research assistants. All the copies of questionnaire administered were well filled and retrieved. Data were analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) Statistics. Mean score of 2.50 was used as cut-off point.

3. Results

Table 1: Mean responses on functional impacts of adult literacy programme on the family life of the rural women

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1.	Adult Literacy Programme equips rural women to assist their children in their academic work	380	204	174	65	2.6	Accepted
2.	Adult Literacy Programme helps rural women to be prudent in the use of available resources for house-keeping	336	288	164	53	2.7	Accepted
3.	It enables them to take better care of their homes and children	360	300	130	60	2.5	Accepted
4.	Adult Literacy Programme helps rural women to develop better relationship with their children and husband	380	264	154	55	2.7	Accepted
5.	It helps them to effectively and efficiently utilize their time	600	240	100	35	3.0	Accepted
6.	Adult Literacy Programme has helped the rural women to become better cooks	300	285	160	65	2.4	Rejected
7.	Through Adult Literacy Programme the rural women are well enlightened on family planning and health related matters	240	165	220	90	2.2	Rejected
Grand Mean						2.6	Accepted

Table 1 shows the mean responses of the rural women on the functional impacts of Adult Literacy programme on their family life. Five out of seven items were accepted by the respondents with mean scores of 2.6, 2.7, 2.5, 2.7, and 3.0. This implies that Adult Literacy Programme has positive impacts in the family life of the rural women enrolled in Adult Literacy Programme.

Table 2: Mean responses on the adult functional impacts literacy programme on rural women's trades

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
8.	Adult Literacy Programme gives rural women new ideas on how to invest in their trades.	520	210	160	35	2.9	Accepted
9.	It helps them to take accurate inventory and accounts of their trade	352	270	140	6	2.6	Accepted
10.	Adult Literacy Programme helps rural women to maintain good human relation with their customers	320	234	144	85	2.5	Accepted
11.	It helps them to know how to access fund for their trades	300	360	80	80	2.6	Accepted
12.	Adult Literacy Programme enlightens rural women on how to utilize their resources effectively for maximum profit	800	150	90	20	3.3	Accepted
13.	The programme equips rural women on modern ways of carrying on their trades	720	180	70	40	3.2	Accepted
14.	Adult Literacy Programme equips the rural women with the knowledge and skill with which to access different business opportunities.	360	300	130	60	2.5	Accepted
	Grand Mean					2.8	Accepted

Table 2 shows the mean responses of the respondents on the functional impact of Adult Literacy Programme on the rural women's trade. All the items are accepted with mean scores follows; 2.9, 2.7, 2.5, 2.6, 3.3, 3.2, and 2.5. The result shows that Adult Literacy Programme has tremendously helped the rural women to improve their trades. The improvement made by the rural women covers knowledge and skill acquisition, raising capital, better management of resources and better human relationship.

Table 3: Mean responses on the functional impacts of adult literacy programme on rural women in relation community development roles

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
15	Adult Literacy Programme helps the women to mobilize and organize other women for community development work	400	300	160	35	2.8	Accepted
16	The women are better equipped to represent their women outside their communities for community development programmes	360	270	100	85	2.6	Accepted
17	Adult Literacy Programme helps the rural women to play active role in politics in their communities	240	390	160	45	2.7	Accepted
18	Adult Literacy Programme helps the women to collect and keep proper record of dues for community development projects	300	360	80	80	2.6	Accepted
19	Adult Literacy Programme helps the women to maintain peace in the various communities	200	135	300	70	2.2	Rejected
	Grand Mean					2.6	Accepted

Table 3 shows the mean responses of the respondents on the functional impacts of Adult Literacy Programme on the rural women's roles in community development. Four out of five items are accepted with mean score as follows: 2.8, 2.6, 2.7, and 2.6. This implies that Adult Literacy Programme has helped the rural women to mobilize other women for community development work, represent their communities, play active role in community politics, and collect and keep proper record of dues. However it is pertinent to note that the only item rejected is on peace which is much needed our communities and the country at large that are presently bedeviled by various forms of conflicts.

4. Discussion

Results in Table 1 indicated that the Adult Literacy Programme provided for the rural women in Ishielu L.G.A of Ebonyi State is functional in their family life. The result shows that the programme has helped the women in better home management and improved family life. This finding agrees with Ocho (2005) who states that the most important reason for women's education is to ensure educated home, an educated family. Ocho further explains that the word "Educated" in this sense is not just a person, who has gone to school and has learnt to read and write, but one who is literate, discipline, cultured, selfless, and a contributing member of her family and society. It is said that charity begins at home. Women are home makers. Most domestic responsibilities are borne by women, they determine to a large extent the mood of the home women. A cursory look into some homes

reveals that the state of the home reflects in the quality of services rendered in offices. It seems that people who enjoy serene, happy and stable family life are better disposed to offer high quality service given the expertise, while the reverse may be the case. It was however observed that Adult Literacy Programme has not made much impact in areas of cookery and family planning among the rural women. These are vital home issues that should be improved through functional education.

Result in Table 2 showed that Adult Literacy Programme has helped the rural women to improve their trades, thereby increasing their economic power. This finding agrees with Eyibe (2005) who states that functional Literacy Programme should not only teach the adult learners how to read and write, but also how to manage adequately their own businesses, to increase productivity and improve their vocational and technical skills and aptitudes. He stresses that for woman to survive economically and independently in the twenty-first century, with its competing demands, she needs to be adequately prepared through training. Wealth creation is one of the major concerns in contemporary Nigeria that is being ravaged by poverty. ESU (2009) noted that a nation's wealth lies in the quality of training its citizens have received, particularly the women who contribute massively to nation building. When women are adequately trained through functional education, they acquire improved trade mechanism that will enable them create wealth.

Findings in Table 3 indicated that the respondents agree that Adult Literacy Programme has empowered them for effective community development services. This finding is in line with Egwu (2008) who notes that functional education for adult learners should enable them contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. The level of development of a society is determined by the level of education obtained by the populace. According to Alumode (2002), education prepares people to bring healthy changes in the society, so that the future is planned to be better than the past and the present.

It was however observed that Literacy Programme offered to the rural women has not helped them to maintain peace in their various communities. Many communities in Nigeria are under the menace of land dispute, communal clashes and wanton killings. Peace is the bedrock of community development since no meaningful community development project can be carried out where there is chaos.

5. Conclusion

The study delved into the functional impacts of Adult Literacy Programme in the family life, trades, and community development roles of the rural women. From the findings it is concluded that Adult Literacy provided for the women in Ishielu L.G.A was functional as it has imparted on the women positively and has improved their lives.

It was however concluded that some aspects of family and community life of the rural women have not been positively affected by the programme. The areas include: cookery, family planning, and need for peace in their communities. These are vital issues that need to be tackled through functional literacy in order to create enabling environment for meaningful development in the country.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Adult education organizers should carry out periodic assessment of their needs of rural women and plan their programmes accordingly in order to meet the needs of the rural women.
2. Cookery, family planning, and peace education should be incorporated into Adult Literacy Programme for rural women.

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