World Journal of Research in Education
educationworldjournal.com
Online ISSN: 3107-961X
Received: 02-09-2026, Accepted: 02-10-2026, Published: 17-10-2026
Volume 2, Issue 4, 2026, Page No. 10-15

Impact of adult literacy on social responsibilities of rural women in Ezza North local government area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigates the impact of Adult literacy on social responsibilities of rural women in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. In doing this, five research questions were formulated and questionnaire containing twenty items were also constructed and administered by the researcher. Statistical mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data. A modified 4 points rating scale was used to identify the degrees of respondents. Samples for the study were thirteen-three adult education centres. Out of the total population of the four hundred 400 adult, while two hundred (200) respondents were finally used as the study sample. From the findings, it was discovered that adult literacy acquired by the rural women in Ezza North Local Government Area helped the women to take better care of their families and others, relate well with people, enhance economic and political activities and enables them participate more in community development and educational programmes. It was recommended that the Federal Ministry of Education and the planners of adult education should improve in their strategies in order to properly create an enabling environment that would help rural people to acquire education and develop skills that would make them self-reliant.

Keywords: Adult literacy, social responsibility, rural women, human development

Introduction

Access to literacy is considered one of the main factors for empowerment particularly empowerment of those excluded from formal system of education and development (Sarah, 2008) [10]. This no doubt is true since literacy provides access to written knowledge and knowledge is power. The natural science, social science and administration enjoyed the wide description of moral philosophy, all these discipline were gradually discovered and pursued their different methodologies and approaches for dissemination of knowledge as information to the learners. Thus it was from Administration as a science of human behaviour in formal setting that adult Literacy as an academic discipline took off (Anyanwu, 2002) [3].

According to UNESCO (2013) globally, 774 million adults (aged 15 years and older) are still unable to read or write – two thirds of them (493 million) are women. In order to redress this persistent gender disparity, the need to empower people (women) through the acquisition of literacy skills is gaining increasing recognition. However, in Nigeria, Adult Literacy (15 years and over) in 2010 rated 61% out of which male had 78% while female were 60% (UNESCO, 2013). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (1997) asserted that basic education opens up communication channels, expands personal choice and control over one's environment, gives them access to information, allows them to cope with work and family responsibilities and also changes the image they have of themselves. Similarly, Agbalajobi (2008) argued that education equips an individual with the skills needed for survival, social interactions, as well as contribute to societal growth. Since age is not a barrier to education and owing to the crucial place of education, adult literacy becomes a vital tool in overcoming the problems of illiteracy. According to Sarah (2008) Adult Literacy is a type of education with planned programs and formal features; same as formal education since both have well defined mode of operation or rigid boundaries and operation through the engagement type of education. Ukeje (2001) [29] saw adult literacy as the type of education given to adults in formal situations at primary, secondary, colleges of education, polytechnics and university settings. Literacy as defined by UNESCO is the ability of a person to function in all the activities in which the knowledge of reading and writing are required for effective functioning of his/her group and the community and also for enabling him/her to continue to use the skills for personal and community development advancement. (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006). This definition becomes important in this study because literacy is regarded as a powerful tool for the development and empowerment of women. Literacy is considered as a right and essential requirement which adds value to life.

The international organization like United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Conference of Africa Ministers of Education have recognized women empowerment especially in areas of Adult literacy as an enabling force and essential tool for realizing social responsibilities and for achieving social, economic, political and democratic growth and development of the society (Sarah, 2008). In the same vein, building a literate society will lead to the development and empowerment of rural women to be able to practice good hygiene, which may lead to the reduction of and death rates; help them in taking care of themselves and their families; and provides them a platform to share their experiences as women (Shilubane, 2007).

The foregoing indicated that adult literacy of women can contribute immensely in attaining their social responsibilities in their rural communities. It suffices to say that adult literacy of women can contribute greatly in improving rural women's responsibilities in family life, social organizations, health matters, civil responsibilities, and school community relations among other areas. According to Mbah, (2015) [17], for adult literacy programme

to be meaningful in the lives of the recipients, it has to be functional. Offorma (2007) [20] defined functionality as the ability to transfer knowledge gained from scholarship to solve personal or societal problems while Asiedu and Oyedeji (1985) [5] 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. Mbah (2015) [17] further argued that functional literacy is work-oriented, career, or occupation oriented literacy.

Since research has undeniably shown that basic education is the fundamental pillar in the development process. It arms individuals with basic knowledge, reading and writing skills and use of numbers which are all critical in the fight against poverty and inequality (Nhamo and Nhamo, 2006) [18], and the fact that women in Africa countries are generally impoverished, live in servitude and relegated to the background due to illiteracy (Mbah, 2015) [17]. Women adult literacy programme should not be limited to just teaching of reading, writing and computing but 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. From the foregoing, Adult literacy is expected to be an essential tool for the attainment of these social responsibilities. Notwithstanding earlier studies, there still exist knowledge gap as to what constitute the impacts of adult literacy on social responsibilities in Ebonyi state and Ezza North Local Government Area in particular. Thus, the study has interest in the impact of adult literacy on social responsibilities of rural women in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

It has been observed that the problem of man has always been how to solve challenges that confront them which may include social, educational, political, economic, human relation and health challenges (Mathaulula 2008). Thus it has been observed that rural women in Ezza North have various challenges affect their lives and wellbeing in the society. They usually manifest as misbehaviour, ignorance, social and political intimidations, class discrimination, intra and inter-personal feeling of inferiority and illiteracy as a result of lack of education. It is pertinent that a great number of these rural people even though do well in other life endeavours, are unable to help themselves in these areas, of which this research work seek to proffer solution that will bridge the gap. Thus this study will aid significant impact towards enlightening adult rural dwellers and women in Ezza North to be educated and trained through adult education.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to find out the impact of Adult literacy on the social responsibilities of rural women in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi state. Specifically, the study is set out to:

1. Ascertain the impact adult literacy has on rural women in the discharge of their civic responsibilities in Ezza North local Government Area of Ebonyi state.
2. Identify the impact adult literacy has on the family life of rural women of Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.
3. Ascertain the impact adult literacy has on the participation of rural women participation in social organizations in Ezza North Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated for the study.

1. Are there impacts attributable to adult literacy on rural women discharge of their civic responsibilities in Ezza North local Government Area of Ebonyi state?
2. What impact has adult literacy on the family life of rural women in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State?
3. What impact has adult literacy on rural women participation in social organizations in Ezza North local Government Area?

Method

The design to be adopted for the study was descriptive survey. This design aid the researcher to generalise the findings of the study using a sample size; Ezza North Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State; is the designated area for the study. The area is home to dialectal speakers of the Igbo language. The people are predominately farmers, civil servants, artisans, and traders. Ezza North is bounded to the North by Ohaukwu Local Government Area; to the south by Ezza South; and to the West by Abakaliki Local Government Area. Ezza North LGA has an area of 305 km² and a population of 145,619 at the 2006 census (NPC, 2006). However, the population of the study was made up of all the adult learners and instructors totaling four hundred (400). There are thirty-three (33) Adult Education Centers in Ezza North Local Government Area which comprise of thirty-five (35) adult instructors and three hundred and sixty-five (365) adult learners. Nicodemus (2016). Simple random sampling technique was used to draw ten (10) Adult Education centers from the entire thirty-three (33) Centers in the study area; seventeen (17) participants from each the sampled centers and thirty (30) instructors. The sample size was therefore two hundred (200), which represents 50% of the entire population used. Instrument for data collection was research-made questionnaire structured to reflect the objectives of the study. The instrument was be made up of two; sections A and B. Section A captured data on personal characteristics of the respondents while section B was made up of four 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 have corresponding value of 4, 3, 2, and I respectively. The comments and suggestions made by the experts were used to modify the items on the instruments. Face validation of the instrument was carried out by the supervisor. The instrument was also presented to two other experts from Educational Administration and Planning and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. These experts vetted each item in terms of sentence structure and adequacy of the instruments. This gave rise to the final draft of the instrument. Test-retest approach was used in establishing the reliability of the instrument; ten copies of the questionnaire were first administered to ten respondents. After two weeks interval, another ten copies of the same questionnaire was also administered to the same group of respondents. Their responses on two occasions were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Approach. A coefficient of 0.53 was obtained and this was positive enough to consider the instrument reliable.

Thus the formula; $r = \frac{\sum xy - \sum(x)\sum(y)/n}{\sqrt{\sum x2 - \sum(x/n)^2 \sum y2 - \sum(y/n)^2}}$

The researcher visits the respondents and administers copies of the questionnaire to them personally. Copies of the questionnaire were also collected by the researcher immediately after completion. The data collected from the field was analysed using mean scores. The four point scale weighted thus: Strongly Agree (SA) = has four points, Agree (A) = has three points, Disagree (D) =has two points, Strongly Disagree (SD) = has one point. A mean score of 2.5 was accepted as a positive impact. Any option with a mean less than 2.5 was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

Are there impacts attributable to adult literacy on rural women discharge of their civic responsibilities in Ezza North local Government Area of Ebonyi state?

Table 1: Showing the impact of adult literacy onrural women discharge of their civic responsibilities.

S/n	Item	N	Sa	A	D	Sd	X	Std	Decision
1	My Exposure to adult literacy helps me to know my rights and value the right of others in the society.	200	100	70	20	10	3.30	0.84	Accepted
2	Helps me to listen to other people's opinion	200	120	60	15	5	3.48	0.74	Accepted
	Helps me to be smart, enlightened and active in civic and political activities.	200	160	37	2	1	3.78	0.47	Accepted
4	Helps me attach values to civic law as active citizen.	200	120	50	20	10	3.40	0.86	Accepted

The result from the data gathered was all positive which shows that adult literacy skill helps rural women to improve their civic life and relationship with people in the society.

Research Question 2

What impact has adult literacy on the family life of rural women inEzza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State?

Table 2: showing the impact of adult literacy on the family life of rural women.

	Item	N	Sa	A	D	Sd	X	Std	Decision
5	My exposure to adult literacy gives me new ideas on how to care for my family, children and others entrusted under my care.	200	150	50	0	0	3.75	0.43	Accepted
6	Helps me pay my children's school fees and provide for the family.	200	100	70	20	10	3.30	0.84	Accepted
7	Enlightens me on how to manage abnormal behaviour of people in my family.	200	150	40	10	0	3.70	0.56	Accepted
8	Helps me participate actively in decision making and resolving issues in my family.	200	90	100	10	0	3.40	0.58	Accepted

The result from the finding was all positive showing that adult literacy skill helps women to improve their family life, and resourcefully support their husbands and relatives.

Research Question 3

What impact has adult literacy on rural women participation in social organizations in Ezza North local Government Area?

Table 3: showing the impact of adult literacy on rural women participation in social organizations.

	Item	N	Sa	A	D	Sd	X	Std	Decision
9	My exposure to adult literacy helps me become an executive member of social gatherings in my community.	200	90	70	30	10	3.20	0.87	Accepted
10	Helps me to preside successfully over meetings and record minutes of meeting.	200	100	40	60	0	3.20	0.87	Accepted
11	Helps me to read and interpret rules and regulations, laws and order etc.	200	110	50	35	5	3.33	0.85	Accepted
12	Helps me contribute meaningfully toward the government of my groups and community.	200	145	55	0	0	3.73	0.45	Accepted

The result of the data gathered was all positive which shows that adult literacy skill helps rural women to improve their participation and contribute to the development of their organizations and social relationship in the society

Discussion of Findings

This study was carried out exclusively in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. It focused on rural women in the area. It is true that respondents who acquired adult literacy were not only rural women but evidences abound that some urban women irrespective of their location are still illiterates and have been part of the programme. No wonder Obi (2002) advocated that the principles of Education for All (EFA) and Life Long Education (LLE) stipulated that education starts from cradle to grave unless impaired. It is a continuous process. This implies that adults no matter their age and locations could acquire literacy if exposed to educational experiences.

Functional skills have helped individuals to be self-reliant. This was why both past and present government in the country introduced various measures geared towards giving of skills to the unemployed and persons to enable them update their certificates. These measures would in effect reduce the rate of poverty in the country. Through this opportunity given to the women by the government, many adults especially the rural women had acquired skills which helped them establish their own business thereby becoming effective members of the society. It also enables them to contribute to various developmental projects in their communities. In agreement with this statement, Okeem (2000) [22] asserted that amongst other things, reading, writing and calculations skills would enable adult learners

improve themselves and determine their future so as to become useful members of the society.

As the findings revealed, the literate women relate easily and more cordially with people including their husbands, children, and family relations. Adult literacy helps women to acquire functional skills that enable them become effective and useful members of the society. Despite the fact that the respondents have children, it never prevented them from acquiring adult literacy which has helped them immensely in catering for their children and family members effectively. This tends to buttress the adage which said from unanimous "when you train a man you train an individual but when you train a woman you train a whole nation". Since the respondents strongly agreed that Adult Literacy gives them these skills, the researcher believed in the simple majority. Literacy skills had helped women to participate in social organizations and also to take part in leadership roles in social organizations. Okokpo (2004) rightly stated in her contribution on social responsibilities that people in various areas have expressed delight over the numerous benefits they got after attending literacy classes, the benefits ranged from securing certain executive positions such as president, secretaries and treasurers in different organizations in their community. This attested to the fact that adult literacy skills help the recipients to become effective members of their social organizations. Asogwa (2001) supported this finding when she said that adult literacy had helped women function well in social and economic development.

Impact of Rural Women who Acquired Adult Education

Exposure to adult literacy had helped women to improve on their relationship with people. From the data collected, it was discovered that, according to Anyanwu (2002) [3] that literacy skills facilitate a change in attitude that the recipient were able to exercise their political and civil responsibilities. Today in Ezza North Local Government many women have despite their endowed autocratic nature taken political appointments as women ward leaders and organized their subordinates. Supporting this further, Umeh (2001) [29] stated that the education provides individuals with all aspects of development morally, intellectually and physically. This would enable the society function both economically, socially and culturally well.

Impact of adult literacy on the family life of rural women

The findings for research question 2 shows that adult literacy skills help rural women in family leadership. The exposure of women to literacy skills has to a great extent affected positively their mould of speaking and acting. In most cases literate women are known by their unguided speeches in our society. Today educated women have improved significantly on their negative emotions and use of words. Anyanwu (2002) [3] stated that literacy skills were given to the missionary converts in Arabic and English language in order to help them maintain morality and to participate in religious activities.

Impact of adult literacy on rural women participation in social organizations

The findings for research question 3 shows that literacy education enables women to become executive member of social gatherings in their community. The researcher observed that it has been fully established that women with literacy skills participate actively in community leadership. Olutola (2001) [23] supported this when he said that literacy skills facilitate a change in attitude and social responsibilities of these women. Finally the exposure of women to adult literacy skills have helped them to embark on vital community projects in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State such as building of health centres, water bore holes, schools, etc. Based on the above analysis, it is believed that the findings that stem from Research Question 4 and 5 go to buttress the fact that literacy skills enhance the effort of rural women to participate actively in vital community projects and Health enlightenment awareness and participation in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Okeem (1992) [21] asserted that functional literacy had helped people to acquire functional skills as well as writing and calculating that could help them to improve themselves and determine their future and become useful members of the society.

Also Sarah (2008), stated that enlightenment and awareness on primary Health care play an important role on basic health issues and programmes, for a healthy community is a wealthy community. Most of these respondents were young ladies with literacy education/skill. This could be attributed to the present social/economic crunch where many men want to marry young ladies with literacy education in order to assist them build good, social and economic base and to be able to train their children well. But recently, the tide has changed and many women were becoming literate through the acquisition of functional literacy. This has brought the upliftment of the status of the rural women in most third world countries. It has helped them to utilize their potentials and capabilities for social responsibilities.

Conclusion

Adult literacy is one of the skills through which individuals are being liberated from the stronghold of poverty, disease, ignorance and early death. It is also one of the greatest weapons for development and social participation. The influence of adult literacy is all embracing as it affects all spheres of human endeavour. A functional literate mother is a great asset to the family, the nearer and distant relations, the community and the society in general. It affords the individual the opportunity to be self-reliant. When everybody in the society becomes self-reliant, it increases the rate of development and social wellbeing. Finally it is in recognition of the numerous advantages that go with a high level of literacy that the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1990 as the International Literacy Year (ILY). The aim of the proclamation is for all societies to make concerted efforts with a view to raising the level of literacy particularly among children and adults all over the world. Therefore efforts should be geared towards providing education be it literacy, formal and non-formal to all and sundry to enable them acquire necessary skill that would help them function effectively as individual, and as a member of the community and society.

Recommendations

In view of the numerous benefits accruing from the acquisition of adult literacy, the researcher hereby makes the following recommendations.

1. Since young adult need to acquire adult literacy skills, effort should be made by Federal Government to ensure

that educational policy are strictly adhered to as it is the case with the present Universal Basic Education.

2. Effort should be made by government or planners of Adult Education to ensure that the contents of the programme are broadened to include basic skills in agricultural production and other crafts to enable the recipients acquire skills that will enable them become self-reliant in order to sustain themselves and society.
3. That for women to function effectively in both their private homes and in endeavours, government or planners of adult literacy should recruit skilled teachers, provide free teaching and learning materials so that adult learners could participate in the programme and acquire necessary skills that should help them function effectively in their various endeavours.
4. That planners and administrators should organize seminars and workshops on the importance of adult education to the adult in the society.
5. That Non-governmental agency should organize seminars and workshops on social roles of the rural populace on their rights and obligations in the society.
6. Efforts should be made by the State government to establish many centres or in alternatively allow the use of primary schools in the evening as centres for adult literacy so that many people will become literate.
7. That churches and religious agencies should organize literacy classes for their illiterate members to enable them know how to read and understand religious books and texts. etc

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