



Evaluation of Socio-Economic Factors Determining Academic Achievement of Women Learners in Literacy Education in Niger State, Nigeria

Ezesuokwu, Johnpaul Ejike, Dr. A. A. Adalakun, Dr. M. F. Olajide and Dr. D.A. Danasabe
Department of
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University. Lapai Niger State. Nigeria
Email: jpzejike@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of socio-economic factors, particularly family background, on the academic achievement of women learners enrolled in literacy education programs in Niger State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from a sample of 390 women enrolled in adult literacy and skill acquisition centers. The findings reveal that family background, including factors such as support, cultural beliefs, material resources, and family dynamics, significantly influences women's literacy achievement. Supportive families were found to encourage regular attendance, provide essential resources, and create conducive study environments, leading to better academic performance. However, financial constraints and cultural limitations still pose challenges for some learners. The study concludes that family involvement is crucial for the academic success of women in literacy education. To enhance the effectiveness of these programs, recommendations include providing financial aid, improving access to educational resources, raising community awareness, offering flexible learning schedules, and encouraging family support. Addressing these barriers could improve literacy outcomes and socio-economic opportunities for women in Niger State.

Keyword: Socio-economic factors, academic achievement, women learners

INTRODUCTION

Education helps men and women claim their rights and realize their potential in economic, political, and social arenas. It is also the most powerful way to lift people out of poverty. Yet, many people especially women are still excluded from education in Nigeria. The current wave of globalization has greatly improved women's lives worldwide, particularly those of women in the developing world. Nevertheless, women remain disadvantaged in many areas of life, including education, employment, health, and civil rights. Thus, the rising concern and the need to provide a quality life for the family seem to be

driving women to focus on literacy and skill acquisition as potential avenues for utilizing second-chance opportunities. (According to United Nations Women, 2021). There is a general belief that the success of any nation is greatly hinged on the quality and effectiveness of its educational sector; education itself has been seen as an instrument of excellence for effecting national growth and development for a sustainable economy. According to the United Nations (2021), women comprise approximately one-fourth of the world's population and are among the poorest and most educationally marginalized groups. Thus, in recent years, improving educational enrollment and learning performance of adult women learners and the girl-child have received attention from researchers, governments, and non-governmental organizations in a bid to combat mass illiteracy, improve learning outcomes, and attain global literacy target set by UNESCO (2010).

Academic achievement in women literacy education is influenced by various socio-economic factors, especially among women in developing regions like Niger State, Nigeria. The success of women learners in literacy education programs depends on factors such as income level, family background, employment status, and educational support systems. There are several Factors that determine Socio-Economic academic performance of women learners in literacy education programs. This evaluation aims to examine the specific some selected factors affecting the academic performance of women learners in literacy education programs in Niger State.

Impact on socio-economic factors on Academic Achievement can be said the emanate from the Women from higher-income households may have better access to educational resources such as books, learning materials, and technological tools, which can enhance their learning experience. Conversely, women from low-income families might struggle to meet the financial requirements of education, affecting their attendance and performance. Studies show that financial limitations often lead to high dropout rates in adult education, particularly among women learners (Adeola, 2019). Women with more stable incomes are



more likely to succeed academically, as they can afford to invest in their education. Employment status plays a dual role while employed women may have some financial stability, their time for study could be limited, leading to lower academic performance due to fatigue or conflicting responsibilities. On the other hand, unemployed women may have more time for study but lack the financial resources necessary to purchase materials or attend classes consistently. Omotosho (2020) found that employed women in literacy programs tend to have lower completion rates due to time constraints, while those with flexible work schedules or no employment often perform better academically. Marital status and the level of support from family members are crucial. Married women with supportive spouses and family structures are more likely to excel in literacy programs because they may receive help with domestic chores and childcare. However, women with unsupportive families or heavy domestic responsibilities may find it difficult to focus on their studies.

According to Adeyemi (2018), married women with young children often face challenges in balancing their educational pursuits with family responsibilities, which negatively affects their academic performance. On the other hand, those with strong family support networks perform better. Another important factor is Educational Background and Literacy Levels. Women who have some prior formal education may perform better in literacy programs compared to those with no prior education. Basic literacy skills enable learners to grasp new concepts more easily and improve retention rates. Research by Bello and Ajayi (2017) highlights that women with prior formal education tend to have better self-confidence and are more motivated, leading to higher academic achievement. Also access to textbooks, instructional materials, and learning centers is critical for academic success. Women in rural areas of Niger State, where literacy education programs are often poorly resourced, may face significant barriers to academic achievement. Mohammed (2019) pointed out that women in urban areas with better access to educational resources generally perform better than those in rural regions where resources are scarce.

Cultural and religious beliefs can either support or hinder women's participation in literacy programs. In some cases, conservative societal norms may discourage women from pursuing education, limiting their academic progress. A study by Isah (2021) revealed that in Niger State, cultural beliefs significantly affect women's involvement in education, with many women forced to prioritize household roles over learning. The academic achievement of women learners in literacy education programs in Niger State is significantly influenced by socio-economic factors such as income level, employment status, family support, educational background, access to resources, and cultural beliefs. Addressing these factors through targeted interventions, such as providing financial aid, improving access to resources, and raising awareness about the importance of women's education, could help enhance the academic success of women in these

Statement of the Problem

The academic achievement of women learners in literacy education programs in Niger State, Nigeria, is significantly influenced by socio-economic factors such as income level and family support. These factors are crucial for women's success in adult literacy programs, yet they remain in an unsatisfactory state, hindering progress. Ideally, income level should enable women to access necessary educational materials, pay for transportation to learning centers, and afford participation in literacy programs without financial strain. However, many women in Niger State, particularly in rural areas, live in poverty and are unable to cover the costs of education. This lack of financial resources forces some women to prioritize immediate economic survival over their educational aspirations, leading to high dropout rates and poor academic performance.

Similarly, family support plays a pivotal role in ensuring women can engage in literacy education without being overburdened by domestic responsibilities. In a supportive environment, husbands and family members would assist with household chores and childcare, allowing women the time and focus needed to succeed in their studies. Unfortunately, cultural expectations often place the entire burden of



family care on women, leaving them with little time or energy for education. In many cases, women's educational efforts are discouraged or undervalued within their families and communities. Efforts have been made by the government and voluntary organizations to address these barriers. The Nigerian government has implemented several adult literacy programs, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to increase access to education for women. These initiatives have included establishing community learning centers and providing free literacy materials. International organizations and local NGOs have also stepped in, offering scholarships, financial aid, and advocacy campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of women's education.

However, despite these efforts, significant gaps remain. The income disparity between rural and urban women continues to limit access to literacy programs, and deeply ingrained cultural norms still pose barriers to women's participation. Financial aid programs often lack the reach needed to support all disadvantaged women, and family support structures remain insufficient in many areas. This persistent gap in the provision of economic support and the lack of widespread cultural change continue to undermine the full potential of literacy programs in Niger State. Therefore, it is crucial to address these gaps through more targeted financial interventions, community sensitization programs, and policies that encourage family involvement in women's education. These steps are necessary to ensure that all women in Niger State can access and benefit from literacy education, improving their academic performance and, ultimately, their quality of life.

Research Question

- 1 Does family background determine women learners' achievement in literacy education in Niger State?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is because the study is not an experimental study and no variable was

manipulated. The population of this study comprises all the eighteen thousand three hundred and fourteen (18314) women who are registered in various Adult Literacy and Skill Acquisition Centres. Niger State. However a simple random sampling was used to in the selection of three hundred and ninety (390). The names collected were written on a piece of paper and folded into a bag, with the help of an assistant the sample was drawn by dip pick register and return method. The instruments used for the study was a self-developed structured questionnaire, which was distributed to the respondents completed and returned. The data collected was analysed using mean and simple percentages to answer the research questions. A criterion means a score of 2.50 was set up for accepting or rejecting a questionnaire item if the mean calculated is equal or above 2.50 it is accepted and rejected if otherwise.

RESULT

Demographics Information

Distribution of Respondents by Household Size

Number of Persons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5	56	14.5
6-10	179	46.3
11-15	137	35.4
16-20	13	3.4
21 and above	2	0.4
Total	387	100.0

The result of the distribution of respondents by household size is presented in Table 4.3. The result shows that 6-10 people's households accounted for 46.3%, followed by 11-15 persons with 35.4%. The 16-20 persons households and 20 persons and above households accounted for 3.4% and 0.5% respectively. This result generally suggests that there are large households in the study area. This also translates to a high dependence rate with an attendant negative impact on the household's income and living conditions. This may in turn impact adversely on the achievement of the women literacy learners since less attention and resources may be devoted to literacy learning programs, and greater



time to improve on household income to cater for the needs of their large households.

Answer to the Research Questions

To answer the research questions, all the responses to the items of the questionnaire were analyzed using the Mean and Standard Deviations Scores. The results are presented and interpreted in the following Tables below:

Research Question 1: Does family background determine women learners' achievement in literacy education in Niger State?

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviations Scores of the responses on family background as a of determinant women learners' performance in literacy education in Niger State
 Source: Authors Field work report 2023;

ITEM	STATEMENT	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	My family members are very supportive of my literacy study and this has encouraged me to be regular in my literacy study	387	3.39	.8673	Accepted
2	My family's religious and cultural beliefs are not against learning therefore I feel relaxed and encouraged to be prompt in my literacy lesson	387	2.68	.9533	Accepted
3	My family's material resources provide the needed for my studies and this enhances my literacy study	387	3.27	.8732	Accepted
4	My family's residential environment provided me with a conducive place for studying at home which contributed to my achievement in my literacy study	387	3.14	.8784	Accepted
5	The friendly climate in my family is a source of inspiration and this contributes to my high achievement in my literacy study	387	2.50	.9631	Accepted
6	My relationships with other family members is very cordial and this gives me peace and rest of mind to concentrate on my literacy study	387	3.16	.8799	Accepted
7	My family's hopes and expectations are the driving factors that motivate my achievement in literacy study	387	3.35	.8692	Accepted
8	My status as a housewife and mother does not affect my study at the literacy center and home	387	3.19	.8763	Accepted
Aggregate Mean			3.085		Accepted

The table presents the mean and standard deviation scores for various statements related to family background and its impact on women's achievement in literacy education in Niger State. Based on the responses of 387 participants, all the items were accepted, indicating a positive perception of family background contributing to their literacy achievements. Generally, a criterion mean of 2.5 is often used in such studies. When the aggregate mean is above this threshold, it indicates acceptance of the hypothesis that family background positively influences women learners' achievement in literacy education. Given that the aggregate mean (3.085) is greater than the criterion mean (2.5), it can be concluded that family background significantly determines women learners' achievement in literacy education in Niger State.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Family Support and Study Regularity recorded high mean (3.39) and low standard deviation (.8673) suggest that family support plays a key role in encouraging regular attendance and dedication to literacy studies. This aligns with studies that emphasize the importance of familial involvement in educational success, particularly for women in disadvantaged contexts (Boudet et al., 2018) similarly the Cultural and Religious Beliefs Although accepted, the mean (2.68) for this item is lower compared to others, indicating that while cultural and religious beliefs do not generally hinder literacy learning, they may still pose challenges for some women. This is consistent with the findings of UNESCO (2019), which highlights the role of socio-cultural factors in limiting access to education for women in some regions. On the Material Resources a relatively high mean (3.27) suggests that access to material resources, such as books or financial support, enhances literacy learning. This corroborates findings from Obanya (2020), which points out that socio-economic conditions directly influence educational attainment among women in rural Nigeria. Conducive Study Environment, with a mean of 3.14, this statement highlights the importance of a conducive home environment for literacy success. As noted by Adepoju (2017), learning environments, both formal and informal, greatly affect academic achievement, particularly for adult learners. More so Friendly Family



Climate recorded a lower mean (2.50) for this item may indicate that while family climate is generally supportive, certain tensions or difficulties may still affect some women learners. However, it is accepted that positive family dynamics contribute to higher educational achievement, supporting the findings of Guryan et al. (2020) on the role of emotional support in adult learning. Peace of Mind and Concentration a mean score of 3.16 reflects how cordial family relationships allow women to concentrate on their studies. This is in line with the work of Ogundele et al. (2019), which identifies peace of mind as a critical factor in adult learners' success. . Motivation from Family Expectations (Item 7): Family expectations appear to be a driving force for women's literacy achievement, as reflected in the mean of 3.35. According to Bandura's (2018) theory of self-efficacy, external encouragement, such as family expectations, significantly impacts motivation and achievement. Balancing Domestic Roles and Studies (Item 8): The mean score of 3.19 suggests that women in the study do not perceive their roles as housewives and mothers to be major obstacles to their education. This supports findings by Aderinoye (2019) that show women can balance literacy education with domestic responsibilities when provided with sufficient support.

The findings suggest that family background, encompassing support, resources, environment, and expectations, plays a significant role in women's literacy achievements in Niger State. This is consistent with the broader literature, which emphasizes the importance of familial and socio-cultural factors in determining educational outcomes for adult women.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that family background significantly influences the academic achievement of women learners in literacy education programs in Niger State, Nigeria. Factors such as family support, material resources, conducive learning environments, and family expectations all contribute positively to women's success in literacy programs. Supportive families enhance regular attendance, provide needed resources, and create a peaceful home environment, all of which

are crucial for academic success. However, challenges such as financial limitations and cultural constraints still hinder some women, particularly in rural areas. Overall, family involvement is essential in promoting the educational advancement of women, especially in disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhanced Financial Support: The government and NGOs should provide targeted financial aid, scholarships, and subsidies to assist low-income women in accessing literacy programs, reducing dropout rates, and improving their academic outcomes.
2. Family and Community Sensitization: Community outreach programs should raise awareness of the importance of women's education and address cultural or religious barriers that discourage women's participation in literacy education.
3. Improvement in Learning Resources: Better-equipped learning centers should be established, especially in rural areas. Free or subsidized textbooks and digital resources should be provided to enhance access to educational materials.
4. Flexible Learning Programs: Literacy education programs should offer flexible schedules to accommodate women's domestic responsibilities and work commitments, enabling more women to participate without conflicting pressures.
5. Encouraging Family Involvement: Policies should be introduced to encourage family support for women's educational pursuits. This could include creating community-based childcare support systems during study hours, helping women balance family responsibilities with education.



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