
ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLES OF ADULT EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY'S HEALTH LITERACY IN AKOKO SOUTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE

By

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Abstract

Health literacy is the ability to obtain, process, and understand health information to make informed decisions, it is critical to individual and community well-being. This paper examines adult education's role in promoting community's health literacy development, emphasizes the importance of empowering populations with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes through adult education towards making sound health decisions. The descriptive research design of the survey type was employed for the study; a sample size of 382 was used, using multistage sampling procedure. Data was collected using a researcher's designed questionnaire (ATROAEITDCHL) with the assistance of 2 trained research assistants. It was revealed from the study that participation in adult education programmes facilitated acceptable health behaviour, increases awareness of common health issues in the community among others. The study recommends the effective implementation of adult education programmes, inclusion of health literacy in adult education programmes, strategic policy review and implementation to make health literacy becomes a public health priority. By fostering health literacy, public health can improve health outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and empower individuals and communities.

Keywords: *Adult education, Health literacy, Community development, Community health*

Introduction

In Nigeria, the intersection of education and health remains a critical area for development, particularly in addressing the nation's diverse and pressing health challenges. With over 200 million people, Nigeria faces significant multidimensional health issues, including high rates of maternal and child mortality, communicable diseases, and rising non-communicable diseases among others. The country's health indicators reveal disparities often linked to socio-economic factors, including education. Adult education plays a pivotal role in community development by empowering individuals with knowledge and skills that contribute to the health, economic, social, and cultural growth of their communities (Olasehinde, 2024). Adult education, as the practice of empowering and educating adults, has emerged as a vital tool for

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empowering individuals and communities. Adult education enhances knowledge and skills acquisition, plays a pivotal role in improving health literacy, promoting healthy behaviors, and ultimately advancing community health outcomes.

The relationship between education and health outcomes has been an incontrovertible issue, with numerous scholars emphasizing the critical role that education plays in shaping individual and community health. In Nigeria, the interplay of adult education and health literacy development presents both opportunities and challenges. This background section examines the context of adult education in Nigeria, its historical evolution, and its implications for community health, supported by relevant scholarly contributions.

Adult education in Nigeria has a rich history, rooted in post-colonial efforts to improve literacy and vocational skills among the adult population. Scholars like Akinsola (2011) argue that adult education serves as a means of empowerment, enabling individuals to improve their socio-economic status and, consequently, their personal health behaviour. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria emphasizes lifelong learning, recognizing adult education as crucial for personal and community development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Health literacy is generally defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate and informed health decisions. Yet the nature of health literacy is neither cognitive nor purely domain-specific. Definitions of health literacy often are more comprehensive in scope and consider holistic aspects of human development, encompassing not only cognitive knowledge but also skills, attitudes, and competencies.

Health literacy is conceptually original because it integrates numerous dimensions of health education and it is interpreted from various viewpoints. Cognitively, health literacy is linked with health behavior, life expectancy, quality of life and community development. Health literacy is grounded in a core belief that basic health information equips individuals to protect their health and depicts the degree to which they are enabled to apply this knowledge through certain critical competencies. It enables people to engage in socially productive activities and realize themselves and its absence could lead to unacceptable health outcomes (Mugo, 2024).

Extensive research support the notion that higher education levels correlate with better health outcomes. Cutler and Lleras-Muney (2016) emphasized that education influences health behaviours, access to healthcare, and the ability to navigate health systems. In Nigeria, a study by Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2018) demonstrates a direct relationship between educational attainment and improved health metrics, such as reduced maternal mortality and enhanced child health. Moreover, adult education programmes that integrates health education have shown to foster healthier lifestyles and outcomes and promote community development (Fapohunda, 2024). According to a study by Iroegbu and Okwu (2017), participants in adult health education initiatives reported significant increases in health knowledge and improvements in behaviours, such as nutrition and

disease prevention. These findings underscore the potential of adult education as a transformative tool for health literacy development in communities.

Nigeria faces a multitude of health challenges that are aggravated by low educational attainment and limited health literacy. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal and child mortality globally, attributed in part to a lack of knowledge about health practices (WHO, 2021). Furthermore, the rise of non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and hypertension, highlights the need for improved health education (Oni et al., 2018). Scholars like Adebayo (2019), emphasizes the importance of targeted adult education programmes in addressing these issues. They advocated community-based education that focuses not only on health information dissemination but also on empowering individuals to engage in preventive health practices and navigate the healthcare system effectively.

The integration of adult education and health promotion can lead to sustainable improvements in community health. Programmes that focus on health literacy, disease prevention, and healthy lifestyle choices have shown promising results. Ezeani (2020) demonstrates that adult education initiatives can significantly improve community responses to health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Lassa fever and others, by equipping individuals with essential knowledge and skills. Furthermore, research by Nwachukwu et al. (2021) illustrates that when adult education programmes actively engage community members; they do not only enhance health knowledge but also foster a sense of agency, enabling individuals to advocate for their health needs. This participatory approach has been linked to improved health outcomes and greater community resilience. This study highlights the vital role of adult education in shaping community health literacy in Akoko South-East Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. It is imperative that significant challenges remain, the potential for adult education to empower individuals and improve health literacy is evident in the scholarly literature. By focusing on the integration of health education within adult learning frameworks, this research aims to explore how these initiatives can be leveraged to address Nigeria's pressing health challenges and promote sustainable community development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of education in health promotion, many Nigerian adults lack access to comprehensive health information and education programmes. This gap has led to misinformation and unhealthy practices that contribute to poor health outcomes. Existing adult education initiatives often focus on vocational skills, leaving health education under-emphasized. This study seeks to explore the impact of adult education on community health development in Nigeria, highlighting how educational interventions can address health disparities and foster healthier communities.

In Nigeria, the relationship between education and health outcomes is a pressing issue that remains inadequately addressed, particularly within the adult population. Despite the existence of various adult education programmes aimed at improving literacy and vocational skills, there is a notable gap in real life health education, which has significant implications for community health literacy development.

Health literacy serves as a significant impetus of the adult population in Nigeria for essential health knowledge, which would, facilitates their ability to make informed decisions about their health. The deficiency of which would contributes to the prevalence of harmful health behaviors and practices, exacerbating public health challenges such as maternal and child mortality and the spread of communicable diseases, (Salami, Olabode, Atoyebi, Lawal & Danmola, 2017; Okeke, 2014).

Top-down programme design approach to adult education programmes may not adequately address the specific health needs and concerns of communities. Without targeted health education components, these programmes would fail to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to address pressing health issues. There is a scarcity of empirical research demonstrating the direct impact of adult education on community health outcomes in Nigeria. This lack of evidence makes it difficult for policy makers and practitioners to understand the potential benefits of integrating health education into adult learning frameworks.

The interplay of education and health disparities is unacceptably pronounced in Nigeria, where socio-economic factors significantly influence health outcomes. Individuals with lower educational attainment are often at a higher risk for poor health, perpetuating cycles of poverty and ill health. These interconnected issues highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive examination of the role of adult education in enhancing health literacy and improving health outcomes in Nigerian communities specifically Akoko South East local government area. By addressing these challenges, this research aims to contribute valuable insights that would inform the design and implementation of effective adult education programmes focused on health literacy development.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Adult education on community health literacy development in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To evaluate how adult education facilitates personal health knowledge among adults in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State.
2. To investigate how Adult Education facilitates community health development in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State.
3. To examine factors that support adult education's contribution to community health development in the Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State.

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4. To identify the challenges that hinders the effectiveness of Adult Education in promoting community health development in the Akoko South East Local Government Areas of Ondo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. How does participation in adult education programmes influence personal health knowledge among adults in Ondo State?
2. How does adult education facilitate community's health literacy development in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State?
3. What factors support adult education on community's health literacy development in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State?
4. What challenges hinder effectiveness of Adult Education's promotion of community's health literacy development in the Akoko South East Local Government Areas of Ondo State?

Research Design

The descriptive research design of the survey type was used for this study. It was aimed at finding out the significance of adult education towards health literacy development in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State. The population of this study comprised all adults (61,397 C.2006) in Akoko Southeast local government area of Ondo State. This study utilized a multistage sampling procedure to select participants for this study; first, five major communities (Isua, Ipe, Ifira, Epinmi, Ipesi) were selected based on population distribution, secondly, purposive sampling procedure was employed to select willing male and female of 382 participants using Research Advisor, (2006) from the available respondents. A self-constructed questionnaire was used for data collection. "Assessment of the impact of Adult Education on Community Health Literacy Development Questionnaire (AIAECHLDQ)" served as the major instrument for the study. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section **A** dealt with bio data of the respondents, and section **B** was designed to obtain information on how Adult education has influenced community health literacy development in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State. The validity of the instrument for both face and content were achieved through experts in research at the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Social Sciences Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko and all observation carried out were thoroughly affected. Reliability of the instrument was carried out by administering the validated questionnaire twice to 20 people within the population in two weeks interval. The result was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the reliability. A reliability of 0.97 was achieved making the instrument to be adjudged highly reliable. The researcher with two research assistants administered the questionnaire to the respondent. The questionnaires items

were retrieved on the day of administration and were collected at the point of administration. The responses obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, and statistics at 0.05 significant.

Results and Discussion

The data collected were analysed using simple descriptive statistics;

Table 1

Socio-economic Characteristics of respondents

Age	Frequency	%
18-20years	84	22.0
21-30	120	31.4
31-40	100	26.1
41-50	48	12.6
51years and above	30	7.9
Total	382	100.0
Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	182	47.6
Female	200	52.4
Total	382	100.0
Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	105	27.5
Married	187	49.0
Widow	30	7.9
Divorce	60	15.7
Total	382	100.0
Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Artisan	84	22.0
Civil Servant	120	31.4
Politician	48	12.6
Farmer	100	26.1
Trader/Business Men and Women	30	7.6
Total	382	100.0
Religion	Frequency	Percent
Christianity	142	37.0

Islam	135	35.0
Traditional	105	27.5
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The age distribution of respondents is a vital factor in assessing Adult education on community's health literacy development. According to Table 1, the respondents show a diverse age range, with a mean age of 41.8 years, age where Nigerians majorly start presenting with diverse health challenges. The age group as shown in the table shows that age between 18 to 20 years represent 22.0%, age 21-30 years represent 31.4%, 31-40 years represent 26.1%, 41-50 years represent 12.6%, and 51 years and above represent 7.9% of the respondent. The age group of 31-40 years has the highest representation. The maturity and experience typically associated with middle-aged adult learners and eagerness for knowledge acquisition is of significance.

The sex distribution of the respondents, as shown in Table 1, indicates a significant gender disparity, with males comprising 47.6% and females 52.4% of the respondents. This pronounced female dominance the local government if properly harnessed in adult education on community's health literacy development it would aligns with broader trends observed in adult education programmes in many regions. The predominance of female respondents could reflect existing socio-cultural norms and economic structures that could favour female involvement in many developmental activities.

The marital status of the respondents, as indicated in Table 1 shows a substantive respondents as being married (49.0 %), followed by singles (27.5%), with a smaller percentage being widow and divorce. This distribution is significant as marital status can influence various aspects of Adult education on community's health literacy development.

The diverse secondary occupations of the respondents, as reflected in Table 1, offer insights into the multifaceted nature of rural livelihoods and it revealed in volumes the strategies that could be employed by Adult Educators to enhance health literacy development programme's involvement. The data reveals that civil servants and artisan represent 31.4%, farmers 26.1%, Artisan 22.0% while politician, 12.6%, Trader/Business Men and Women respond 7.6%. This pattern of income diversification has implications for adult education on community's health literacy development.

The religious distribution of the respondents in the study shows a majority identifying as Christians (37.0%), followed by Islam (35.0%), and a smaller percentage adhering to traditional religions (27.5%). This disparities in religious background is significant to this study because individual religion has a way of influencing participations in community programmes.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: How does participation in health literacy education programmes influence health knowledge among adults in Akoko South East Local Government Area?

Table 2:

Analysis of data on how participation in health literacy education programmes' influence on health knowledge among adults

S/No	Items	Response				
		SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Participation in adult education programmes has improved my understanding of health issues	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
2	The adult education programmes I attended provided practical knowledge that I can apply to my daily life	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
3	Awareness of common health problems in my community has increased due to adult education	170	152	45	15	382
		44.5	39.7	11.8	3.9	100
4	Participation in these programmes has encouraged me to adopt healthier lifestyle choices	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
5	Adult education programmes have positively impacted my overall health and well-being	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 revealed that participation in health literacy education programmes' influence on health knowledge among adults in Akoko South East Local government area of Ondo State. The distribution shows above 83.5% of the respondents affirmed that participation in adult education programmes has improved their understanding of health issues. A great number of the respondents (84 %) also supported the statement that adult education programmes they attended provided practical knowledge that can be applied to their daily life, the respondents equally supports the idea that awareness of

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common health problems in their community has increased due to participation in adult education programmes. This is in agreement with the European Association for the Education of Adults declaration 2015, (EAEA, 2015). The participants equally affirmed that the programmes have encouraged them to adopt healthier lifestyle choices. Lastly, it was also affirmed by 84% of the respondents that the overall wellbeing of the people has improved due to participation in adult education programmes. However, a few of the respondents were of divergent opinion to the benefits derivable from participating in community health literacy programmes within their communities.

Research Question 2: How does adult education facilitate community's health literacy development in Akoko South East local government area of Ondo State?

Table 3

Analysis of data on roles of adult education in fostering community's health literacy development.

SNO	Items	Response				
		SA	A	D	SD	Total
6	Adult education programmes promote skills development that is essential for community economic growth	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
7	Participation in adult education enhances civic engagement among community members	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
8	Adult education contributes to raising awareness of social issues within the community	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
9	Adult education fosters leadership skills that empower individuals to take on community roles	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
10	Adult education plays a crucial role in encouraging community members to collaborate on local projects	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 3, revealed the roles of Adult education in fostering community's health literacy development in Akoko South East Local Government Areas of Ondo State. 83.8% of the sampled respondents support that adult education programmes promotes skills development that is essential for community economic growth, adult education enhances civic engagement among community members, adult education contributes to raising awareness of social issues within the community. Majority of the respondents (84.0%) affirmed the statement that adult education fosters leadership skills that

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empower individuals to take on community roles. Lastly, Adult education plays a crucial role in encouraging community members to collaborate on local projects was affirmed by 83.8%. This is in tandem with Možina, E. (2022) in EAEA release 2024, which affirmed that adults' participation in Adult Learning and Education (ALE) empowers the adults for increased social responsibilities and enhanced community development. There is a pocket of respondents who negated the benefits did so probably because they are among those who have not participated in any Adult Education programmes for community health literacy development or other adult education programmes due to personal perception of such programmes.

Research Question 3: What are the factors that influence adult education on community's health literacy development in the Akoko South East Local Government Areas of Ondo State?

Table 4:

Analysis of Data on the factors that influence adult education on community health development

S/No	Items	Response				
		SA	A	D	SD	Total
11.	Access to educational resources significantly affects adult education in community health literacy development	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
12.	Availability of qualified instructors and facilitators impacts the quality of adult education in health literacy development	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
13.	Availability of conducive learning environment impacts community health literacy development	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
14.	Cultural beliefs within the community influence participation in adult education related to health	152	170	45	15	382
		39.70	44.5	11.8	3.9	100
15.	Awareness of health issues and the importance of education affect community members' participation in adult education.	152	170	45	15	382
		39.7.0	44.5	11.8	3.9	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 4 revealed factors that influence adult education on community's health literacy development in the Akoko South East Local Government Areas of Ondo State. Majority of the respondents (84%) supported that access to educational resources

significantly affects adult education in community's health literacy development; the availability of qualified instructors and facilitators influences the quality of adult education in health literacy development. The respondents largely supported the view that some cultural beliefs greatly influence health literacy development. In a similar trend, 84% of the respondents supported that cultural beliefs and attitudes within the community influence participation in adult education related to health. Lastly, 84% of the respondent agreed that awareness of health issues and the benefits derivable from education affect community members' participation in adult education.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges that hinder the effectiveness of Adult Education in promoting community health development in the Akoko South East Local Government Areas of Ondo State?

Table 5:

Analysis of data on the challenges of Adult education in fostering community's health literacy development

SN	Items	Response				
		SA	A	D	SD	Total
16	Lack of funding and resources limits the effectiveness of adult education programmes in promoting community health	152 39.7	170 44.5	45 11.8	15 3.9	382 100
17	Insufficient trained facilitators negatively impact the quality of adult education in health	152 39.7	170 44.5	45 11.8	15 3.9	382 100
18	Cultural beliefs and practices in the community hinder participation in health-related adult education programmes	152 39.7	170 44.5	45 11.8	15 3.9	382 100
19	Poor community awareness about the importance of health education limits participation in adult education	152 39.7	170 44.5	45 11.8	15 3.9	382 100
20	Government policies do not adequately support adult education initiatives in health development	152 39.7	170 45	45 11.8	15 3.9	382 100

Source: Field Survey 2024.

Table 5; revealed challenges militating the effectiveness of Adult Education at promoting community's health literacy development in the Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State. It was revealed that 84% of the sample supported that lack of funding and resources limits the effectiveness of adult education programmes in promoting community health literacy development. Dearth of trained facilitators

equally impact the quality of adult education in health literacy development negatively. Cultural beliefs and practices in the community hinder people's participation in health-related adult education, poor community awareness about the importance of health education limits, finally, government policies do not adequately support adult education initiatives in health literacy development.

Discussion of Findings

The study shows Akoko South East Local Government populations have access to adult education programmes, which can facilitate health literacy development. It highlights demographic factors like age, income, employment, and educational status of an individual could affect community health literacy. Greatly of significance are gender, age, income, employment, religion cultural beliefs, education and they strongly correlate with health literacy levels. The highest and best score should be 5 followed by 4 the arithmetic average between 4-5 is very good followed by the arithmetic average 3-4 which is considered good accordingly. The results of the study were between the arithmetic averages between 3-4, which is considered good.

Finding from research question one revealed that 84% of the respondents affirmed participation in adult education programmes has improved their understanding of health issues and provided practical knowledge that they apply to their daily life. This is crucial for preventing diseases, reduce significantly cost of healthcare deliveries, management of prevailing health challenges, and improving health outcomes, as supported by Nutbeam (2020) who affirmed that health literacy provides a foundational knowledge of individuals' ability to access, understand, appraise, and apply health information to make informed health decisions.

Research question two revealed that Adult education fosters community's health literacy development. Adult education programmes promote skills development, fosters leadership skills which enhances civic engagement, that is essential for individual and community economic growth. This aligns with other scholars, which emphasizes adult education plays a crucial role in enhancing individuals' skill sets, particularly in areas such as health literacy, financial literacy, and vocational skills. These skills empower individuals to make informed decisions regarding their health, contributing to the overall health development of their communities. This finding aligns with the declaration of Merriam et al. (2017) that adult education can nurture leadership skills by providing opportunities for individuals to learn decision-making, problem solving, and collaboration techniques.

The result from research question three shows that the major factors that influence adult education on community health literacy development are access to educational resources, qualified instructors and facilitators, cultural beliefs and attitudes significantly affects adult education in community health literacy. The result agreed with findings of Brockett and Hiemstra (2018) which highlight the availability of adequate educational resources, such as learning materials, technological tools, and training facilities, as essential in adult education.

Research question four exposed challenges that hinder the effectiveness of Adult Education in promoting community health literacy development; lack of funding and resources, insufficient trained facilitators, cultural beliefs and practices, poor community awareness and government policies among others. This is in agreement with Brockett and Hiemstra (2018) postulations on limited financial resources which can lead to the scaling back or discontinuation of adult education programmes. In many cases, programmes related to community health face difficulty in sustaining themselves or in reaching underserved populations due to inadequate funding, which ultimately affects the health outcomes within those communities.

Conclusion

Adult education plays a critical role in enhancing community's health literacy development, by fostering skills development, promoting leadership, and encouraging civic engagement. The study underscores adult education programmes, particularly those focused on health literacy and vocational skills, significantly empower individuals to make informed decisions about their health. However, this study is delimited to Akoko South East local Government Area of Ondo State, it suffers limitations like getting people willing to participate in responding to questionnaire; some due to time constraints others due to apathy or non interest in research. It will further boost data generation if there be replication of this type or study in broader arealike senatorial district or the entire state. There could equally be further studies how sex, age, religion, location and occupation influences adults participation in Adult Education learning programmes in Ondo state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made: -

1. Governments and organizations (State, Local Government Areas) should prioritize funding for adult education programmes, especially those focusing on health literacy. Adequate financial resources are essential for providing necessary teaching materials, technology, and infrastructure to ensure the success of these programmes.
2. State governments, Local Government, Non-Governmental Organisations, Philanthropists Organisations, and wealthy sons and daughters of the State should improve in their commitment and investments in Adult Education programmes particularly in rural areas of the state.
3. There should be a concerted effort to train more qualified facilitators who are well-versed in adult education methods and health-related topics. This will improve the quality and impact of adult education in community's health literacy development.
4. Adult education programmes should incorporate culturally relevant content and approaches that respect local beliefs and practices. This ensures that health

education is perceived positively and would be implemented effectively by community members.

5. There is a need for better awareness campaigns to inform the community about the benefits of adult education in improving health outcomes. These campaigns can increase participation and engagement in adult education programmes.
6. Governments should create and implement policies that provide sustained support for adult education initiatives. This can include offering incentives to organizations that run adult education programmes and creating a favorable policy environment that supports community's health literacy development.

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