



Adult Education as Human Infrastructure in Sustainable Social Values and Development in the Ever-Changing World

¹Okunola, J. L.; ²Alabi, A. E. and ³Oduntan, M. O.

¹Department of Sociological Studies, Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, Nigeria

²Department of Adult and Development Education, Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, Nigeria

³Department of Employment Relations & Human Resource Management, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Corresponding author: okunolajl@tasued.edu.ng

Abstract

Adult education constitutes a foundational pillar of human infrastructure, essential for fostering sustainable social values and driving community development in an ever-changing world. This study examines the impact of adult education and several empowerment programmes on women's participation in community development activities in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. Situated within the broader discourse on gender equity, social inclusion, and sustainable development, the study recognises that women's meaningful participation in community life is inseparable from their access to structure educational and empowerment opportunities. Employing a quantitative research method, while the study randomly selected respondents. 100 respondents were selected from the community, and data were analysed using simple statistical techniques including tables, percentages, and Chi-Square (χ^2). Findings reveal a significant dearth of adult education programmes tailored specifically for women in the community, a gap that directly constrains their involvement in community development processes and undermines the community's capacity for inclusive, sustainable growth. The study further identifies limited awareness, inadequate resources, and the absence of gender-sensitive programming as compounding barriers. Recommendations include the development of targeted adult education initiatives encompassing literacy, vocational training, and leadership development for women. Additionally, the study advocates for strategic collaboration with local stakeholders to establish sustainable programmes, raise community awareness, and mobilise adequate resources. Gender-sensitive approaches must be incorporated into programme design, alongside mechanisms for continuous evaluation and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of the community. Ultimately, investing in women's adult education is an investment in the social infrastructure that sustains communities across generations.

Keywords: Adult education, Community development, Empowerment, Evaluation, Women participation

1. Introduction

Access to education consist one of the most transcending forces available to individuals and societies alike. It affirms the power to elevate living standards, stimulate economic productivity, and serve as a critical vehicle for dismantling structural inequalities. Therefore, education is widely acknowledged as a fundamental catalyst for creativity, social mobility, and poverty elimination, particularly for women and other marginalized groups who have historically been denied full participation in civic and economic privileges (Sanchez Moretti & Frandell, 2013).

Globally, while significant has been made in expanding access to education for women and girls, considerable disparities persist, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Okunola, J. L., Alabi, A. E. and Oduntan, M. O. (2026). Adult Education as Human Infrastructure in Sustainable Social Values and Development in the Ever-Changing World, *Ijagun Journal of Social and Management Sciences (JOSMAS)*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 173-178.

©COSMAS Vol. 10, No. 1, June 2026

By 2024, the global adult literacy rate had risen to 86.3% for both sexes, with males at 90% and females at 82.7%, reflecting measurable but still uneven improvement (Chinonso, 2024). A woman who is literate and educated is better positioned to make significant contributions to socio-economic development and to advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (Pritchett & Sandefur, 2020). Nevertheless, women remain disproportionately represented among the world's illiterate population, particularly in developing economies where gender-based discrimination remains deeply entrenched (Samarakoon & Parinduri, 2015; Medel-Añonuevo & Bernhardt, 2011).

In the Nigerian context, this challenge takes on a particular dimension. Nigeria ranks among the lowest countries globally in terms of literacy, with a literacy rate of approximately 59.57%, placing it 35th out of African countries surveyed (UNICEF, 2022). This national figure conceals deep internal disparities: young women from the wealthiest 20% of households

are four times more likely to be literate than those from the poorest households, and in seven northern states, Bauchi, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara, Jigawa, Kebbi and Niger, fewer than three women in every ten are literate (UNICEF, 2015). Although the Southwest geopolitical zone, where Ogun State is located, records comparatively higher literacy rates, women in rural and rural-urban communities within the region still face structural disadvantages that limit their access to education and civic participation. In 2018, the literacy rate of females aged 15 and above in Nigeria stood at only 52.65%, approximately 18.6% below the male rate for the same age group (World-Bank, 2026), underscoring the persistence of the gender gap even as overall figures improve.

At the policy level, Nigeria has made institutional commitments to address these gaps. The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) was established to coordinate adult literacy delivery, particularly in rural areas, with programmes including mass literacy delivery in rural communities and vocational and continuing education initiatives targeted at underserved populations (NMEC, 2017). Despite these frameworks, implementation has remained uneven across states, and women, particularly in rural communities continue to be inadequately reached by existing programmes.

Adult education, broadly defined as any structured learning activity in which adults engage (Kwapong, 2015), has long been regarded as a powerful tool for equipping individuals with essential literacy and numeracy competencies. Research confirms that such programmes play a significant role in empowering adults to challenge poverty and inequality (Nhamo & Nhamo, 2016). Through adult education, learners can obtain equivalency qualifications or pursue professional development opportunities tailored to their needs. In the Nigerian context, illiteracy among women not only diminishes their social standing but also affect them from meaningful participation in governance and civic activities, including caregiving, household management, and spousal obligations, which, alongside geographical, cultural, religious, and economic barriers, make consistent engagement with educational programmes particularly difficult (Cleveland Clinic, 2018; Wanyama, 2014).

Participation in community development encompasses the cooperative efforts of individuals and groups to actively shape their own social environments. Onyeozu (2017) describes this participation as the channelling of individual action into collective endeavours built on mutual support and collaborative engagement. (Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2018) further articulates the civic values embedded in community participation, noting that it:

1. Strengthens confidence in the feasibility of community-oriented programme goals;

2. Reinforces belief in the potential for both personal and communal aspirations to be realised
3. Builds trust in legitimate authority and affirms the primacy of collective community purpose over narrow individual interests.

These elements underscore the importance of structured participation, encompassing deliberation, planning, resource mobilization, and evaluation, in driving meaningful community change Onyeozu (2017). Women's engagement in such processes is particularly significant: not only does it amplify their contribution to community growth, but research also links women's involvement in community-based economic projects to poverty alleviation in both developing and developed countries (Namatovu & Matovu, 2024).

Women Literacy and empowerment programmes occupy a central place in community and national development frameworks. Women, as primary caregivers and first educators within the family unity, play an outsized role in shaping the next generation's development. Therefore, it is within this scope that this study aims to bridge gaps between women participation and adult education empowerment programs.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, women's participation in community development activities such as; skill training workshops, microcredit and microfinance programs, maternal and reproductive health education programs, etc remains limited in Ijagun Community. Adult education programs like; functional literacy programs, women's vocational training workshops, computer literacy classes for women, health and hygiene education, etc. have been implemented to enhance women's skills, knowledge, and self-confidence, however, it's not clear how much they really impact women's involvement in community development. This research aims to address this gap by examining the impact of adult education programs and their influence on women's engagement in community development activities in Ijagun Community.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to assess the role of adult education programmes in shaping women's participation in community development in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State. Other specific objectives are to:

1. Identify and document the adult education programmes currently accessible to women in Ijagun Community.
2. Assess the level of women's engagement with available adult education programmes in Community.
3. Identify the key determinants that either facilitate or impede women's participation in adult education programmes; and
4. Evaluate the outcome of adult education programmes in terms of women enhanced

knowledge, skill acquisition, and self-confidence in Ijagun Community.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are the anchorage for the study:

1. What adult education programmes are presently available for women in Ijagun Community?
2. To what degree do women in Ijagun Community actively engage with adult education programmes?
3. What are the key determinants facilitating or impeding women's participation in adult programmes in Ijagun Community?
4. What are the outcomes of adult education programmes in terms of women enhanced knowledge, skill acquisition, and self-confidence in Ijagun Community?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following hypothesis will be tested in this study:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between women and adult education programmes in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

H₀₂: Adult education programmes have no statistically impact on women's participation in community development activities in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

2. Literature Review

Nwanorue and Kobani (2020) conducted an empirical investigation into the contribution of adult education programmes to women's involvement in community development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State. Structured around three research objectives, the study adopted an analytical survey design and established that basic literacy education had equipped women with the knowledge base required for active participation in community decision-making processes. Similarly, functional literacy programmes were found to have enhanced women's economic circumstances, while skills acquisition training contributed to improvements in their overall economic status. The researchers concluded that these combined educational interventions meaningfully elevated women's capacity to contribute to community development efforts, and recommended sustained and improved follow-up programmes to consolidate these gains.

A study by Osuchukwu and Nebolise (2019) explored the barriers encountered by Nigerian women seeking to engage in adult education programmes for sustainable development. Their findings highlighted a range of obstacles, including inconvenient evening class schedules, limited financial resources, discouragement from spouses and family members, inadequate learning facilities, and the cumulative physical and emotional demands placed on women. The study called for education managers and library administrators to conduct comprehensive assessments of adult education centres and introduce improvements in the quality of learning environments and support services.

Oboqua & Odenigbo (2022) investigated the factors shaping rural women's involvement in community development projects in Baise Local Government Area, Cross River State. Their analysis revealed that women's educational attainment and occupational status were significant predictors of their participation in community development projects. Based on these findings, the authors recommended intensified awareness campaigns and sensitisation efforts to promote adult literacy programmes across communities, with particular attention to the role of agencies responsible for non-formal education.

Adesokan (2018) examined the relationship between women's empowerment and sustainable development in Nigeria, finding that empowerment initiatives exert a positive and significant influence on development outcomes at both the social and community levels. The study affirmed a constructive relationship between women's empowerment and sustainable development and reinforced the argument that education should be deliberately deployed as an empowerment tool, given that empowered women are better positioned to drive meaningful societal progress.

Adekola and Kumbe (2016) found that the acquisition of literacy and vocational skills by women had positive effects on their engagement in community development activities, with literate women demonstrating higher levels of participation compared to their non-literate counterparts. In a related vein, Akaraka (2015) found that adult literacy programmes produced tangible functional benefits for rural women, positively affecting their family relationships, economic activities, and capacity to engage in community development, including participating in deliberations on community needs. Buye (2010) similarly noted that low levels of formal education among women were associated with reduced engagement in community planning, decision-making, and project implementation.

Mordi (2022) demonstrated that higher educational attainment among women was strongly associated with more active participation in community development projects, whereas limited education was linked to exclusion from critical stages of project identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This finding was consistent with those of Okpoko (2016), who observed that educational deficits among women in Kenya constrained their ability to contribute effectively to project implementation, notwithstanding increases in women's representation in leadership. Egbo (2020) further established that functional literacy education empowers women with the requisite knowledge, skills, and capabilities to participate meaningfully in community development particularly in the execution of community programmes and projects.

3. Materials and Methods

A qualitative research framework was adopted for this study to enable a nuanced and in-depth exploration of

Table 1: Responses from respondents on relationship between women and adult education programmes

a) Responses

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Women	17	14	8	2	41
ADE Programs	20	15	7	3	45
Total	37	29	15	5	86

b) Chi Square Table calculation on the relationship between women and adult education programmes

<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	$(O - E)$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
17	17.63	-0.63	0.3969	0.02251
14	13.83	0.17	0.0289	0.00208
8	7.15	0.85	0.7225	0.10104
2	2.38	-0.38	0.1444	0.06067
20	19.36	0.64	0.4096	0.02115
15	15.17	-0.17	0.0289	0.00190
7	7.84	-0.84	0.7056	0.09000
3	2.61	0.39	0.1521	0.05827
				Total=0.35762

Calculated value = 0.36, $df = 3$, level of significance = 7.815

Table 2: Responses from respondents on impact of adult education programmes on women's participation

a) Responses

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total
ADE Programs	18	14	7	2	41
Women Participation	20	15	8	2	45
Total	38	29	15	4	86

b) Chi Square Table calculation on impact of adult education programmes on women's participation

<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	$(O - E)$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
18	18.11	-0.11	0.0121	0.000668
14	13.85	0.15	0.0225	0.001624
7	7.15	-0.15	0.0225	0.003146
2	1.91	0.09	0.0081	0.004240
20	19.88	0.12	0.0144	0.000724
15	15.11	0.11	0.0121	0.000800
8	7.85	0.15	0.0025	0.002866
2	2.09	-0.09	0.0081	0.003873
				Total=0.017943

Calculated value = 0.018, $df = 3$, level of significance = 7.815

the relationship between adult education programmes and women's participation in community development activities in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State. This methodological choice was informed by the complexity of the social phenomena under investigation, and by the need to capture the lived experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of participants within their natural social context. The study population comprised all indigenes and residents of Ijagun Community in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. A sample of 100 respondents was drawn from this population through simple random sampling, ensuring that every member of the population had an equal probability of selection. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of close-ended items. The instrument was reviewed and validated by the research supervisor and subsequently subjected to

reliability testing to confirm its consistency. Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency tables and percentages, to address the stated research questions. Chi-Square (χ^2) analysis was employed for hypothesis testing, with all hypotheses evaluated at the 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results

The results of the study are presented in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between women and adult education programmes in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

Table 1b above show that adult education programme does not have anything to do with women participation in community development. The calculated value (0.36) is lesser than the table value (7.815) then the null hypothesis was accepted while the alternative hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is no significant relationship between women and adult education programmes.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant impact of adult education programmes on women's participation in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

Table 2b above show that adult education programme does not have any impact on women participation in community development. The calculated value (0.018) is lesser than the table value (7.815) then the null hypothesis was accepted while the alternative hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is no significant impact of adult education programmes on women's participation.

5. Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis 1 shows that women and adult education programmes in Ijagun Community, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State has no significant relationship. This was negated by Nwanorue & Kobani (2020) who both registered that basic literacy education programme has empowered women with requisite knowledge to participate in decision making; functional literacy programme - has enhanced women economic life; and skill acquisition programmes have improved the economic status of women, all these programmes have improved women capability to participate in community development.

Hypothesis 2 shows that adult education programmes has no significant impact on women's participation. In support of this result, the works of Osuchukwu & Nebolise (2019) concludes that the challenges faced by Nigerian women in their pursuit of ongoing adult education programmes to include: time for the classes which are usually held in the evening, poor financial status, lack of encouragement from spouses and relations, poor learning environments, and stress.

6. Conclusion

The study underscores a significant gap in adult education programs targeting women in the Ijagun Community, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. The absence of such initiatives has evidently hindered women's participation in community development activities. Moreover, the findings highlight a broader deficiency in adult education programs within the community, indicating a systemic issue that requires urgent attention. These conclusions underscore the critical need for targeted interventions to address the educational needs of women and the broader community, thereby fostering greater participation in community development endeavors.

7. Recommendations

1. Develop and implement tailored adult education programs specifically designed to cater to the educational needs of women in the Ijagun Community. These programs should encompass basic literacy skills, vocational training, and community leadership development.
2. Conduct outreach programs to raise awareness about the importance of adult education and women's empowerment, encouraging community support and participation.
3. Incorporate gender-sensitive approaches into community development planning, ensuring that women's voices and perspectives are actively included in decision-making processes.
4. Continuously evaluate and adapt adult education programs based on feedback and evolving community needs, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and empowerment.

References

- Adesokan, K.S. (2018). Women empowerment as a catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria: Adult education as a tool. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(11), 136-142.
- Adekola & Kumbe (2012) Women Education and the implication on Rural Development in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Journal of Society and Communication*, 10 (1) 10-22
- Buye, R. (2022). Effective approaches to community development. www.researchgate.net accessed on 2nd of October, 2022.
- Cleveland Clinic. (2018). Women: Work, home, multiple roles, & stress. Retrieved 17 November 2018 from <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/5545>
- Chinonso, I. (2024, October 25). Bridging the Literacy Gap in Nigeria. *Verifafrica*. <https://www.verifafrica.com/insights/bridging-the-literacy-gap-in-nigeria>
- Egbo, B. (2000). Gender, Literacy, and Life Chances in Sub-Saharan Africa (Vol. 16): Multilingual Matters
- Kobani, D (2020) Impact of Adult Education Programmes on Women Participation in Community Development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science* 20(12):42- 49
- Kwapong, O. T. (2015). Training and empowerment/using adult education for empowerment of rural women. *Journal AED-Adult Education and Development. Edition 65*. Retrieved 18 August 2017 from <https://www.dvvinational.de/en/adult-educationand-development/editions/>
- Namatovul, A. & Matovu, K. (2024). Women's community engagement and its impact on empowerment and social changes in Mbarara District. *Metropolitan Journal of Social and Educational Research*, 3(4), 135-140. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380168368_Women's_Community_Engagement_And_Its_

- Impact_On_Empowerment_And_Social_Changes_In_Mbarara_District
- Medel-Añonuevo, C., & Bernhardt, A. (2011). Sustaining advocacy and action on women's participation and gender equality in adult education. *International Review of Education*, 57, 57–68.
- Mordi, M.K. (2022). Gender discourse in nigerian politics: Understanding the rise and growth of women's participation. *Abraka Humanities Review*, 12(1), 71-80.
- Nhamo, S. & Nhamo, G. (2016). Macroeconomics, adult education, and poverty eradication in Southern Africa. *International Review of Education*, 52(3-4), 305-322.
- NMEC (2017). Policy guidelines for mass literacy, adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. <https://education.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/policy--for-mass-literacy-adult-non-formal-education.pdf>. guidelines
- Oboqua, E. D. ., & Odenigbo, V. N. (2022). Factors Influencing Rural Women Participation in Community Development Projects in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. *Rivers State University Journal of Education*, 25(1), 201–209. Retrieved from <https://rsujoe.com.ng/index.php/joe/article/view/103>
- Okpoko, A. (2010). Positioning adult literacy to empower rural women for sustainable livelihood in Nigeria. A Paper Presented at the National Conference on Repositioning Adult and Non-Formal Education Process in Nigeria, Organized by Nigeria National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE), at the University Ibadan.
- Onyeozu, A. M. (2017). *Understanding community development*. Port Harcourt: Davidstones Publishers Ltd.
- Osuchukwu, N. P., & Nebolise, N. L. (2019). Women in Adult Education Program for Sustainable Development: Challenges and Implications for Library and Information Services. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 14(1), 22–32.
- Oyebamiji, M. A. and Adekola, G. (2018). *Fundamentals of community development in Nigeria*. Port Harcourt: Uniport Press.
- Pritchett, L., and Sandefur, J. (2020). Girls' schooling and women's literacy: Schooling targets alone won't reach learning goals. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 78.
- Samarakoon, S., and Parinduri, R. (2015). Does education empower women? Evidence from Indonesia. *World Development*, 66, 428-442.
- Sanchez Moretti, G. A. and Frandell, T. (2013). Literacy from a right to education perspective (UNESCO document 221427). Retrieved 18 August 2023 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000221427>
- Schurmann, A. T. and Johnston, H. B. The group-lending model and social closure: microcredit, exclusion, and health in Bangladesh. *Journal Health Population Nutrition*. 27: 518- 27.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2017). *Literacy rates continue to rise from one generation to the next*. Fact sheet No.45.FS/2017/LIT/45. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <https://bit.ly/3nfqu2d>
- UNESCO, (2014). *Gender equality matters: Empowering women through literacy programmes*. Available From: www.unesdoc.unesco.org.
- UNICEF, (2022, June). Foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN). Nigeria Cheat Sheet: Foundational Learning. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/7736/file/UNICEF%20Nigeria%20Cheat%20Sheet:%20Foundational%20Learning.pdf>
- UNICEF (2015). All Children in School by 2015: Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, Nigeria country study. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/search/ec5dbe16-ed59-4f02-99dd-af92d2cb2745>
- Women, U. N. (2015). *Progress of the world's women 2015-2016: Transforming economies, realizing rights*. UN Women. <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2015-04/apo-nid54422.pdf>
- World Bank Group (2026, April 11). Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LIT.R.FE.ZS>