

FAMILY VARIABLES AND PARTICIPATION
OF ILLITERATE WOMEN IN NON-FORMAL
BASIC EDUCATION IN NORTH-CENTRAL
NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of family variables on participation of illiterate women in non-formal basic education programme in North-central Nigeria. The study was a descriptive survey. The population for the study was all illiterate women in North-central Nigeria. 18 Local Government Areas of Kogi, Kwara and Niger states were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Two LGAs were randomly selected from each of the three Senatorial Districts in each of the states. This makes a total of six LGAs that were selected from each State. 641 respondents were selected from 2714 women participating in Basic and Post Literacy programmes in the 18 LGAs. A structured questionnaire titled Family Variables and Participation of Illiterate Women in Non-formal Basic Education (FVPIWNFBFE) was used to elicit information for the study. The instrument was validated using face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was done using test-retest and the reliability index was 0.81. The data from the study was analysed using a descriptive statistics. The result showed that 66.89% of the respondents agreed that family background

variable influence participation of illiterate women in non-formal basic education. Based on the finding it was recommended that more awareness on the importance of educating illiterate women should be done on the electronic media in form of giggles, talk shows, film show etc, Incentive, in form of monthly stipends, loans or material gifts that meet immediate needs of participants should be given to them to motivate them.

Keywords: Family Background, Women, Illiteracy, Non-formal Basic Education.

Introduction

Women are indispensable members of the society who play significant and influential roles in the development of families and society. They are like wheel on which childbearing, childrearing and the family upkeep revolve. They are expected to ensure the well-being of their families in addition to economic, social and political roles they play. Educating women will enable them perform their multiple roles better. This is because education is globally recognized as the most viable tool for equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, attitude and values needed to perform their roles in society. Jekayinfa and Kolawole (2010) defined education as the whole process that entails training and acquisition of special skills, knowledge, attitude and values needed by individuals to be responsible and be able to contribute positively to growth and development of society. Illiterate women are not supposed to be excluded from participating in the available learning opportunity that can harness and develop their potentials for personal, family and societal development. They therefore, need to be given the opportunity to acquire at least basic education, which is the least educational level that any individual can acquire to be functional member of the society, in non-formal setting.

Non-formal basic education is the alternative educational opportunity created that can give the illiterate women, and other illiterate members of the society, who were unable to acquire basic education in formal school system the second chance of acquiring

basic education outside the formal school setting. Mafela, Ramorogo, Letshabo and Maruatona (2000) defined Non-formal basic education (NFBE) as learning opportunities organized outside the formal system of education to enable children, youths and adults learn basic skills and achieve competence in literacy and numeracy. Participating in Basic Literacy and Post Literacy programmes under Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education presently leads to the acquisition of basic education in non-formal setting (Federal Ministry of Education (FME), 2010). Participation of illiterate women in Non-formal Basic Education has to do with them having unrestricted opportunity to enroll, persist and complete both the Basic Literacy and Post Literacy programme without dropping out of the programme. Non-formal basic education programmes are organized in all the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja to cater for all the illiterate youths and adults.

It is evident that there are still many illiterate women that are still educationally disadvantaged in Nigeria, especially women in the North-central zone of Nigeria because of poor participation in NFBE programmes. The recent statistics on female literacy rate in North-central showed 52.8 percent literacy rate for women in ability to read and write in any language (National Literacy Survey, 2010). This shows that there are 47.2 percent of women in the North-Central States are stark illiterates who can neither read nor write in English or any other local language (National Literacy Survey, 2010). This is shown in the breakdown of female population and their literacy rate in English Language and in any language in North-central presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Adult Female Population and their Literacy Rate in English and in any Language in North-central Nigeria

| State | Population of Female adults by 2006 census | Population and % of female Literacy rate in English (%) by 2010 | Population and % of female Literacy rate in any language (%) by 2010 | Population and % of adults female that are stark illiterates by 2010 |
|----------|--|---|--|--|
| Benue | 2,055,186 (59.4%) | 1,220,780 (63.1%) | 1296,822 (36.9%) | 758,364 |
| Kogi | 1,566,750 (59.1%) | 930,650 (63.8%) | 999,587 (36.2%) | 567,163 |
| Kwara | 1,150,508 (30.7%) | 353,206 (37.9%) | 436,042 (62.1%) | 714,466 |
| Nasarawa | 917,719 (35.8%) | 328,543 (42.8%) | 446,784 (57.2%) | 524,935 |
| Niger | 1,917,524 | 621,278 (32.4%) | 753,587 (39.3%) | 1,163,937 (60.7%) |
| Plateau | 1,585,679 (51.95) | 822,967 (57.6%) | 913,351 (42.4%) | 672,328 |
| Abuja | 664,712 (47.8%) | 317,732 (50.7%) | 337,009 (49.3%) | 327,703 |
| Total | 9,858,078 | 4,662,871 (47.3%) | 5,204,065 (52.8%) | 4,654,013 (47.2%) |

Source: National Population Commission, 2006 and National Literacy Survey, 2010

Table 1 above indicates that there are 9,858,078 adult females in North-central states of Nigeria by 2006 population census. 5,205,065 (52.8%) of them can read or write in any language by 2010 while 4,653,013 (47.2%) of them are stark illiterates who can neither read nor write in any language. This shows that there is still high percentage of illiterate women in North-central Nigeria despite the fact that Non-formal basic education programmes have existed for over two decades in North-central states.

Table 2: Adult Female Population, Population of women that are Stark Illiterate and Female participation in Adult Literacy programme in North-Central Nigeria

| State | Adult Female population | Population of Adult Female that are stark Illiterates by 2010 | Female Participation Rate and its % in Basic Literacy and Post Literacy in 2010-2012 | Population of Adult Female that are stark Illiterates by 2013 |
|----------|-------------------------|---|--|---|
| Benue | 2,055,186 | 758,364 | 50,080 6.6% | 708,284 |
| Kogi | 1,566,750 | 567,163 | 4,885 0.9% | 563,278 |
| Kwara | 1,150,508 | 714,466 | 10,603 1.9% | 703,863 |
| Nasarawa | 917,719 | 524,935 | 8,445 1.6% | 416,490 |
| Niger | 1,917,524 | 1,163,937 | 22,383 4.3% | 1,141,553 |
| Plateau | 1,585,679 | 672,328 | 14,881 1.3% | 657,447 |
| Abuja | 664,712 | 327,703 | 15,224 4.6% | 4312,479 |
| Total | 9,858.078 | 4,654,013 | 126,456 2.8% | 4,527,557 |

Source: National Literacy survey (2010) and Mass Literacy Status Report: 2011-2012

Table 2 above shows that out of the 4,654,013 women that are stark illiterates by 2010, only 126,456 (2.8%) of them have participated in Adult Literacy programme by 2012. This shows that the level of women participation in NFBE programme is low in North-central states despite the fact that there are many Basic Literacy and Post Literacy learning centres that are spread across the states and the importance of acquiring at least basic education

to the development and empowerment of women. This is an indication that there are challenges militating against women participation in NFBE in the North-Central States.

Women are not living in vacuum. They live in physical and social environment that are capable of influencing their behaviours, their decisions, their live choices, the opportunities that come their ways and what they do with the opportunities, such as participating in available educational opportunity. Jimoh and Olawuyi (2002) asserted that factors within the individuals' environment influence their life chances. Studies have shown that there are factors within the family that can promote or inhibit access to participate in learning; ability to learn and the outcome of learning in all type and at all level of education (Daramola, 1994, Russell and Stafford, n.d, De Serf, 2002). These factors are also capable of influencing enrolment, retention, completion and achievement of illiterate women in Non-formal Basic Education programmes. The family influences its members directly and indirectly through certain factors that are present in it. These factors are frequently referred to as family background variables. Individual's family background is measured and classified based on variables such as the level of the education of parents/couple, the type of occupation of parents/couple, family socio-economic status, family size, child rearing practices, family type and Family Support and encouragement (Russell and Stafford, n.d, Kobiowu, 1994).

Culturally, women live under the control of their husbands, in many cases, they are expected to seek the consent and the support of their husbands before they can participate in any organized learning outside their homes. They therefore need the support of their husbands and other family members to be able to participate in learning outside the home. Husbands support for wives learning which can be moral, emotional and financial, is significant for married women participation in learning outside the home. The studies of Park and Choi (2009), Abdullah Parasuraman, Maniapan, Koren & Jones (2008), Aderinoye (2007), Edward cited in Matjeke (2004). Park and Choi (2009) and Abdullah, Parasuraman, Maniapan, Koren & Jones (2008) found moral support from spouse and other family members to be important in adult decision to persist

in learning. Aderinoye (2007) and National Literacy Survey (2010) found husbands' refusal among other factors that hinder enrolment in Adult literacy programme. Lieb (1991) and Edward cited in Matjeke (2004) found lack of child care facility and family responsibility as barriers to participation.

Women are also expected to be involved in economic activities to support their families. The trading and other informal businesses sometimes take women time and attention. It takes commitment, determination and motivation for women to abandon their businesses to participate in educational activity. The studies of Peng and Lee cited in Ajibola (2006), Mualuko, Muthamia, Ipara and Obaki (2009), Bhola cited in the study of Matjeke (2004) and Darkenwald and Merriam (1982). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) found socio-economic status (SES) to be strong determinant of adult participatory behaviour in learning. Peng and Lee cited in Ajibola (2006) also found SES as a variable that has consistently predicted truancy and drop out; Lieb (1991) found lack of money to be barrier to participation; Kember (1989) and Aderinoye (2007) found earning income to support family and participating in booming economic activities as barriers to adult learners participation in education.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether family background variables influence participation of illiterate women in non-formal basic education in North-central Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated:

1. the level of illiterate women participation in non-formal basic education programme in North-central.
2. whether socio-economic status influence participation of women in non-formal basic education programme in North-central.
3. whether family support influence participation of illiterate women in non-formal basic education programme in North-central.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of illiterate women participation in non-formal basic education programme in North-central?
2. Does socio-economic status influence illiterate women participation in non-formal basic education programme in North-central?
3. Does family support influence illiterate women participation in non-formal basic education programme in North-central?

Method

The study was a descriptive survey. The population for the study was all the illiterate women in North-central, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the three (3) that were formerly together under the Federal Government of Nigeria and European Economic Community (FGN/ EEC); and United Nations Development Project (UNDP) Assisted Project and because two of these three states (Kwara and Niger) have the lowest female literacy rate of 37.9% and 39.3% respectively in ability to read and write in English or any other language in North-central Nigeria (National Literacy Survey, 2010). The three states were Kogi, Kwara and Niger states respectively. 18 Local Government Areas were selected the three using stratified and simple random sampling techniques from 51 LGAs in the three states. Two LGAs were randomly selected from each of the three Senatorial Districts in each of the states. This makes a total of six LGAs that were selected from each State. In selecting the respondents for the study, the female learners in the selected LGAs were stratified according to programme and proportionate sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 641 respondents from a target population 2714.

Instrumentation

Structured questionnaire that was titled Family Background and Participation of Illiterate Women in Non-formal Basic Education (FBVPIWNFBPE) was used to elicit information for the study. The instrument was validated using face and content validity. The reliability index of the instrument was 0.81. The instrument was translated to Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe and Batonu which are the major languages spoken in the sampled LGAs of the three states, to avoid

alteration in the original content of the instrument by the research assistants at the time of administration.

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

The Research assistants who understood the different local languages assisted in the administration of the instrument on female learners in each of the Local Government Areas. The data collected for this study were analyzed using percentage.

Results of Analysis

Out of the 641 copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, 635 copies of the questionnaire were found usable for analysis.

Research Question one: What is the level of participation of illiterate women in Non-formal Basic Education programme in the North-central states?

To answer this research question, the female illiterate population and rate of participation of illiterate women in Basic Literacy and Post Literacy programme from 2006-2012 in the three selected States were compared and this is shown in the Table 3.

Table 3: Female Population, Female Illiterate Population and Female Enrolment in Basic Literacy and Post Literacy Programme from 2006-2012

| State | Numbers of Female Illiterates | Female Enrolment in Basic Literacy 2006-2012 | Female Enrolment in Post Literacy 2006-2012 | % of illiterate women Participation NFBE |
|-------|-------------------------------|--|---|--|
| KOGI | 567,163 | 11,246 | 4,591 | 2.79% |
| KWARA | 714,465 | 22,668 | 3,332 | 3.63% |
| NIGER | 1,163,937 | 53,949 | 4,300 | 7.7% |
| Total | 2,445,565 | 84,863 | 12,223 | 3.96% |

Source: National Population Commission (2006) and Agency for Mass Education in Kogi, Kwara and Niger states

To determine the level of participation of illiterate women in NFBE programme in North-central Nigeria, the population of illiterate women in the selected states was compared with the rate of participation of illiterate women in Basic and Post Literacy programme from 2006-2012 in the states. Out of 2,455,565 illiterate women only 97,086 of them participated in NFBE programme. The percentage of participation was 3.96%. This indicates that the participation rate was very low.

Research Question two: Does socio-economic status influence participation of illiterate women in Non-formal Basic Education programme in the North-central states?

Table 4:

| | Socio-economic Status and Participation | TRUE | (%) | Not True | (%) | TOTAL(%) |
|---|--|--------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Poor financial status of families hinder participation | 325 | 51.18 | 310 | 48.82 | 635(100) |
| 2 | Lack of immediate economic benefits for participants | 476 | 74.94 | 159 | 25.04 | 635(100) |
| 3 | Participating in economic activities to support the family needs hinders participation | 438 | 68.96 | 197 | 31.04 | 635(100) |
| 4 | Lack of opportunity for employment after participation in NFBE hinders participation | 420 | 66.14 | 215 | 33.84 | 635(100) |
| | Average of Total | 141.75 | 65.31 | 220.25 | 34.69 | 635 (100) |

Items 8-12 show that 65.30% of the female learners consider poor Socio-Economic Status which was expressed in poor financial status of family, lack of immediate economic benefits for participants, participation in economic activities and lack of employment for

participants to be influencing participation of illiterate women in NFBE programme negatively.

Question three: Does family support influence participation of illiterate women in Non-formal Basic Education programme in the North-central states?

| S/NO | Family Support and Participation | TRUE | (%) | Not True | (%) | TOTAL (%) |
|------|--|------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Some husbands do not allow their wives to enroll in non-formal basic education programme | 360 | 56.69 | 275 | 43.31 | 635(100) |
| 2 | Some husbands sometimes stop their wives from attending classes after enrolment | 440 | 69.29 | 195 | 30.71 | 635(100) |
| 3 | Husbands always complain when their wives get home late after classes | 357 | 56.22 | 278 | 43.78 | 635(100) |
| 4 | Lack of assistance in doing household chores when women attend classes hinders women participation | 404 | 63.63 | 231 | 36.38 | 635(100) |
| 5 | Lack of financial support from husbands to meet learning needs hinders participation | 439 | 69.13 | 196 | 39.29 | 635(100) |
| 6 | Lack of assistance for child care during classes hinders participation | 386 | 60.79 | 249 | 37.17 | 635(100) |
| 7 | Lack of assistance to care for sick family members when women go for classes hinders participation | 399 | 62.83 | 286 | 48.82 | 635(100) |

Items 1-7 in the results in the Table 4 show that female learners consider poor Family Support which was expressed in husbands' refusal, husbands' complaints, husbands' interruption, lack of financial support from husband to meet learning needs, lack of assistance in doing household chores, caring for children and for sick family members to be negatively influencing participation of illiterate women in NFBE programme. The table shows that 62.65% of female learners considered poor Family Support to be influencing participation of illiterate women in NFBE programme negatively.

Discussion

The Tables indicate that family socio-economic status and family support influence participation of illiterate women in Non-formal basic education programmes in North-central Nigeria as shown in the responses on Table 3 and 4. The findings show that the majority of the respondents (70.13%) consider poor Family Support to be influencing the participation of illiterate women in Non-formal Basic Education Programme negatively. They consider poor Family Support which was expressed in husband's refusal, husband's complaints, husbands' interruption, lack of financial support from husband to meet learning needs, lack of assistance to do the household chores, take care of children and sick family members to be influencing participation of illiterate women in NFBE programme negatively. This agreed with earlier findings of Park and Choi (2009), Abdullah Parasuraman, Maniapan, Koren & Jones (2008), Aderinoye (2007), Lieb (1991) and Edward cited in Matjeke (2004). The poor support for illiterate women's education by their husbands might be due to their lack of value for female education, their feelings that their ego might be threatened by their educated wives or because of religious and cultural influences.

The third finding of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents (67%) consider poor Socio-Economic Status of the illiterate women which are expressed in lack of money to buy learning materials, lack of immediate economic benefits for participants, participating in economic activities to support the family needs and lack of opportunity for employment to be influencing participation of illiterate women in NFBE programme.

Learners might decide to drop out when they cannot meet the demands of buying learning materials or if there are pressing family needs that participating in NFBE cannot meet. The finding agreed with the earlier findings of Peng and Lee cited in Ajibola (2006), Mualuko, Muthamia, Ipara and Obaki (2009), Bholu cited in the study of Matjeke (2004) and Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) and Lieb (1991). This means that learning press and the opportunity cost of participation are strong determinants of participation of illiterate women in NFBE. There is therefore the need to motivate the learners by giving them loans or gifts that can meet some of their daily needs to boost participation, especially in Post Literacy programme.

Conclusion

There is urgent need to increase the rate of illiterate women's participation in Non-formal Basic Education programme to reduce female illiteracy in Nigeria and to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goal of reducing illiteracy rate of women. Stakeholders need to pay more attention to the basic education that the illiterate women acquire in non-formal setting for illiteracy to be eradicated or minimized in North-central Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. There should be more sensitization and awareness activities inform of jingles, talk shows and playlets on the various media, especially on radio and television in local languages on the importance and the benefits of illiterate women participation in Non-formal Basic Education programmes from time to time.
2. Community and religious leaders should be involved in counseling and enlightening the husbands of the illiterate women on the need for them to allow and support their wives to participate in NFBE in their communities.
3. Incentive in form of monthly stipends, loans or material gifts that meet immediate needs of participants should be given to

them so as to reduce or eliminate attrition caused by poverty. Employment opportunity should also be created for the graduands. These would serve as motivating factors for potential learners and the participants.

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