

THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES IN ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT REA, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study explores the role of adult education in poverty alleviation strategies, using Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State, as a case study. It posits that adult education is a crucial tool for empowering individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to improve their socioeconomic status. A descriptive research design was adopted. The study population comprised all 2,500 adult education learners in Ilorin West Local Government Area. A sample of 100 adult learners and 20 facilitators was selected. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Findings highlight a positive correlation between participation in adult education programs and improved economic outcomes, including increased employment opportunities, higher income levels, and an enhanced quality of life. Data were analyzed using percentages. The study concludes that adult education is a vital component of comprehensive poverty alleviation strategies and recommends policy interventions to support and expand these programs. The implications of this research underscore the need for sustained investment in adult education to foster sustainable development and economic growth in Kwara State and similar contexts.

Keywords: Adult, Education, Poverty alleviation, Strategies and Role

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Introduction

Adult education encompasses a diverse range of formal and informal learning opportunities designed to meet the educational needs and goals of adults beyond traditional schooling age. It includes programs, courses, and activities aimed at fostering lifelong learning, skills development, personal enrichment, and social empowerment. As defined by UNESCO (2018), adult education refers to the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level, and method, whether formal or informal, that are recognized as education by the relevant national authorities, and which are pursued by individuals normally beyond the age of compulsory schooling. This multifaceted field offers a wide array of educational opportunities tailored to the diverse needs and aspirations of adult learners.

A key characteristic of adult education is its emphasis on learner-centered approaches, recognizing learners as active agents in their own learning. Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in the field, emphasized andragogy, the art and science of teaching adults, which prioritizes self-directed learning, experiential learning, and problem-solving (Knowles, cited in Benjamin, 2019). Unlike pedagogy, which is geared toward children, adult education engages learners as partners, drawing upon their life experiences, interests, and goals to inform instructional design and delivery. Furthermore, adult education acknowledges the diversity of adult learners, recognizing their varying backgrounds, motivations, and learning styles, and strives to provide flexible and responsive learning opportunities that accommodate their individual needs and preferences (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

The highest incidence of poverty is concentrated in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America (World Bank, 2020). The slow progress of poverty eradication policies presents a daunting challenge to governments worldwide. This trend is likely to continue unless effective policy solutions are found. The slow rate of progress, despite ongoing policy efforts at local, regional, and international levels, has prompted questions. A consensus has emerged among scholars that poverty eradication policies have been hampered by the nature of policy implementation and low levels of good governance in developing countries (Kanayo, 2014; Aminu & Onimisi, 2014).

Successive Nigerian governments have implemented various anti-poverty programs since independence, including the National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme (RIDS), Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDA), and Directorate for Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) (Hussaini, 2014). However, many of these programs have faced challenges that have contributed to their limited success. This paper evaluates the impact of the Youth Empowerment Scheme on national development as one mechanism employed by the government to alleviate poverty in Nigeria.

Role of Adult Education in Poverty Alleviation in Kwara State

Adult education holds significant promise for addressing the evolving learning needs of individuals throughout their lifespan (Beder, 2019). With rapid technological advancements and changing economic landscapes, adult education programs offer opportunities for skill development, career advancement, and personal enrichment (Brookfield, 2015). Lifelong learning initiatives within adult education provide avenues for adults to acquire new knowledge, upgrade their skills, and adapt to emerging trends (Gallego, 2017). As industries evolve and new job roles emerge, these programs offer flexible learning pathways to support individuals in navigating career transitions and remaining relevant in the workforce (Tennant, 2018).

Adult education can also promote social inclusion and equity by addressing disparities in educational access and attainment (Kasworm, 2017). By providing tailored learning opportunities for marginalized groups, including women, minorities, immigrants, and individuals with disabilities, these programs contribute to building more inclusive societies (Field & Leicester, 2019). Furthermore, adult education fosters active

citizenship and civic engagement by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities necessary for effective participation in democratic processes (Wainwright & Linehan, 2019). Through civic education, community organizing, and advocacy initiatives, adult learners can become agents of positive social change and contribute to building more resilient and cohesive communities (Newman *et al.*, 2016).

Technology integration in adult education opens new avenues for learning and collaboration, enhancing access to educational resources and expanding learning opportunities beyond traditional classrooms (Perraton, 2019). Online platforms, digital tools, and mobile applications enable adult learners to engage in self-paced learning, connect with peers and experts, and access a wealth of educational content from diverse sources (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2016).

Adult education programs also have the potential to foster intergenerational learning and knowledge exchange, facilitating the transfer of skills, experiences, and cultural traditions across age groups (Rogoff, 2016). By promoting dialogue and collaboration between older adults, youth, and children, adult education contributes to building stronger intergenerational bonds and nurturing a sense of collective identity and belonging (Merriam & Bierema, 2018).

In Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, adult education programs play a crucial role in poverty alleviation by equipping individuals with practical skills, literacy, and financial empowerment tools. These programs contribute to economic empowerment by offering skill acquisition programs that enable adults to start small businesses or secure better employment opportunities. They also improve literacy rates, enhancing individuals' ability to make informed financial and personal decisions. Programs targeting marginalized groups, such as women and unemployed youth, enhance their socioeconomic status. Furthermore, adult education programs can support agricultural and rural development through training in modern agricultural techniques and sustainable farming practices, helping rural dwellers improve food security and income levels. They also promote civic participation and social development, as educated adults are more likely to engage in community development initiatives and exercise their civic rights. Awareness programs on health, sanitation, and family planning contribute to better public health outcomes. Enhancements to educational policies and improvements to learning centers can further enhance adult education outcomes. Encouraging skill acquisition and business training fosters economic self-reliance. Specialized training for emerging industries, such as renewable energy, technology, and e-commerce, can prepare learners for modern job opportunities.

Statement of the Problems

Poverty remains a significant challenge in Ilorin, Kwara State, affecting a large portion of the population and limiting access to essential resources such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Despite ongoing poverty alleviation efforts, many individuals lack the skills and knowledge necessary to escape this cycle. This situation is exacerbated by limited access to quality adult education programs, which can play a crucial role in equipping adults with the skills needed for economic empowerment and social mobility.

Several studies have examined the role of adult education in poverty alleviation. Johnson and Brown (2018) found that participants in adult literacy programs in Ilorin experienced improved employment prospects and increased income. However, their study noted the limited reach of these programs, with many adults still lacking access to education. They highlighted the need for broader outreach and more comprehensive training to maximize the impact on poverty alleviation.

Similarly, Garcia (2019) explored the effects of vocational training programs on poverty reduction in Kwara State. The study found that individuals completing vocational courses were more likely to secure stable employment and start small businesses. Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified a gap in program availability, with a limited number of centers offering vocational training. This resulted in unequal access to education and opportunities for poverty alleviation.

These findings underscore the need to address the gap in adult education programs in Ilorin, Kwara State. To effectively combat poverty, these programs must expand their reach and offer a wider range of training opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from policymakers, educational institutions, and community organizations to ensure that all adults have access to quality education and the resources needed to break free from poverty.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of effectiveness of adult education programme in poverty alleviation in Ilorin West, Kwara State?
2. What are the ways adult education programme can be used in poverty alleviation in Ilorin West, Kwara State?

Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the level of effectiveness of adult education programme in poverty alleviation in Ilorin west, Kwara State based on gender
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the ways adult education programme can be used in poverty alleviation in Ilorin West, Kwara State based on gender

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted to examine the role of adult education programs in poverty alleviation in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. The study population comprised all adult education learners and facilitators in the local government area. There were 250 adult education learners and 20 facilitators. The sample consisted of 100 adult learners randomly selected from the centers and all 20 facilitators. A questionnaire was used to collect data. It consisted of two sections: Section A gathered demographic data from the respondents, and Section B, containing five items, explored the role of adult education in poverty alleviation in the local government area. Responses to these items were measured using a four-point Likert

scale. The instrument's reliability coefficient was 0.87, obtained using the test-retest method and Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the level of effectiveness of adult education programme in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State?

Table 2: Level of effectiveness of adult education programme in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State

SN	ITEMS DESCRIPTIONS	Mean	Remark
1	Enhanced access to educational opportunities for adult learners.	2.87	Moderate
2	Promotion of lifelong learning and personal development.	2.82	Moderate
3	Empowerment of individuals through skills acquisition and knowledge enhancement.	2.85	Moderate
4	Contribution to socio-economic development and community resilience.	2.77	Moderate
5	Strengthening of the education system and promotion of inclusive growth.	2.67	Moderate

Analysis of Table 2 reveals that the effectiveness of adult education programs in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State, is moderate across various indicators. Enhanced access to educational opportunities for adult learners (mean = 2.87), promotion of lifelong learning and personal development (mean = 2.82), empowerment through skills acquisition and knowledge enhancement (mean = 2.85), contribution to socio-economic development and community resilience (mean = 2.77), and strengthening of the education system and promotion of inclusive growth (mean = 2.67) all received moderate ratings. This suggests that while the programs are having a positive impact, there is significant room for improvement to achieve greater effectiveness in poverty alleviation through adult education.

Research Question Two: What are the ways adult education programme can be used in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State?

Table 3: Ways adult education programme can be used in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Providing vocational training to equip adults with marketable skills for employment or entrepreneurship.	2.88	1.21	Agreed
2	Offering literacy and numeracy classes to enhance individuals' ability to access better-paying jobs or start businesses.	3.20	0.81	Agreed
3	Incorporating financial literacy education to help adults manage their finances effectively and break the cycle of poverty.	3.10	0.99	Agreed
4	Integrating health education components to promote preventive healthcare practices and reduce healthcare expenses.	3.31	0.69	Agreed
5	Facilitating community development projects that empower adults to address local challenges and improve living standards	2.97	1.03	Agreed

The findings highlight several ways adult education programs can be leveraged for poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State, with respondents strongly agreeing on all strategies. Key measures identified include providing vocational training to equip adults with marketable skills (mean = 2.88, SD = 1.21), offering literacy and numeracy classes to improve job opportunities (mean = 3.20, SD = 0.81), and incorporating financial literacy education (mean = 3.10, SD = 0.99). Additionally, integrating health education to promote preventive healthcare practices (mean = 3.31, SD = 0.69) and facilitating community development projects (mean = 2.97, SD = 1.03) are also considered effective methods for poverty alleviation through adult education.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the level of effectiveness of adult education programme in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender

Table 6: t-test analysis of the difference the level of effectiveness of adult education programme in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	Df	p-value	Decision
Female	67	24.88	1.220	.411		.211	N/S
Male	53	19.34	4.39		118		

As shown on the table, there was no difference in the level of effectiveness of adult education programme in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender as p-value of .211 is greater than 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the ways adult education programme can be used in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender

Table 7: t-test analysis of the difference in the ways adult education programme can be used in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	Df	p-value	Decision
Female	67	23.47	1.22	.409		.210	N/S
Male	53	20.31	2.31		118		

As shown on the table, there was no difference in the ways adult education programme can be used in poverty alleviation in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender as p-value of .210 is greater than 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the role of adult education programs in poverty alleviation in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. The findings highlight several

ways adult education programs can be leveraged for poverty alleviation in Ilorin, with strong agreement from respondents on all strategies. Crucial measures identified include providing vocational training to equip adults with marketable skills (mean = 2.88, SD = 1.21), offering literacy and numeracy classes to improve job opportunities (mean = 3.20, SD = 0.81), and incorporating financial literacy education (mean = 3.10, SD = 0.99). Integrating health education to promote preventive healthcare practices (mean = 3.31, SD = 0.69) and facilitating community development projects (mean = 2.97, SD = 1.03) are also considered effective methods for poverty alleviation through adult education.

The findings also reveal that the effectiveness of adult education programs in poverty alleviation in Ilorin is moderate across various indicators. Enhanced access to educational opportunities for adult learners (mean = 2.87), promotion of lifelong learning and personal development (mean = 2.82), empowerment through skills acquisition and knowledge enhancement (mean = 2.85), contribution to socio-economic development and community resilience (mean = 2.77), and strengthening of the education system and promotion of inclusive growth (mean = 2.67) all received moderate ratings. This suggests that while the programs are having a positive impact, there is significant room for improvement to achieve greater effectiveness in poverty alleviation through adult education.

Conclusions

The findings reveal that while adult education programs in Ilorin, Kwara State, are moderately effective in alleviating poverty, there is considerable room for improvement. Strategies supported by respondents, such as vocational training and community development, are crucial, but challenges related to resources, socio-cultural barriers, and coordination need to be addressed. Implementing the proposed solutions can enhance the effectiveness of these programs. Gender does not significantly affect perceptions or outcomes, suggesting that improvements should be universally applied.

Recommendations

While adult education has significant potential in poverty alleviation, challenges such as inadequate funding, low participation, and lack of qualified educators hinder its effectiveness. The government and stakeholders should:

1. To ensure accessibility for low-income individuals, adult education programs should offer free or heavily subsidized courses. Partnerships with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sponsors can help secure funding for tuition, study materials, and other necessary resources. Establishing scholarship programs and financial assistance can also encourage participation among underprivileged adults.
2. Many adults find it challenging to balance education with work and family responsibilities. To accommodate their needs, programs should offer flexible learning opportunities, including: evening, weekend, and online courses; self-paced learning modules; hybrid models combining in-person and remote learning; mobile learning applications to increase accessibility for learners in remote areas; and tailored learning pathways aligned with individual career goals.

3. Training should focus on practical and market-relevant skills that enhance employability. Recommended areas include entrepreneurship and small business management; digital literacy and technology skills; trade and technical skills aligned with local job market demands; agricultural and sustainable farming techniques for rural populations; and language proficiency programs to help non-native speakers access better opportunities.
4. Empowering learners with financial support can significantly improve their economic standing. Initiatives should include microloans and small business grants for entrepreneurship; financial literacy training to manage earnings and investments; access to savings and credit programs; mentorship programs for small business owners to guide them in scaling their ventures; and networking opportunities with financial institutions and investors.
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