

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF READING SKILLS ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEARNERS IN LAGOS STATE

Apena, Temilola Taiwo,
&
Osikomaiya, Olufunke Mojisola

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of reading skills on adult learners participating in the Adult Basic Education (ADBE) programme in Lagos State. Reading is a core language skill and essential to academic success, lifelong learning, and personal development. Many adult learners struggle with reading due to limited educational opportunities, early dropout, or displacement, leading to poor academic outcomes. This research assessed the effectiveness of ADBE programmes in improving reading skills and to discover the challenges adult learners face after the programmes. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and a total of 546 participants were randomly selected from six educational zones in Lagos State, with 91 learners drawn from each zone. Data were gathered using a validated instrument titled *Questionnaire on Impact of Reading Skills on Adult Basic Education Programme* (reliability coefficient = 0.75). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, were used to answer the research question, while inferential statistics such as t-test and ANOVA were used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that the programme had a high positive impact on learners' reading skills, with significant improvements recorded in reading. Moreover, challenges related to reading, such as decoding difficulties and lack of phonemic awareness, were found to be low. The study concludes that reading instruction within Adult Basic Education learners should be strengthened using phonics-based and

learner-centered approaches to further enhance literacy development and promote inclusive, lifelong learning in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Keyword: Reading Skills, Adult Basic Education (ADBE), Lifelong Learning, Literacy Development and Andragogy

Introduction

Reading skill occupies a very prominent position in the life of a literate person. It is a core skill in formal school environment and for students to be successful academically, they must be equipped with the ability to read. Yashpal and Sunil (2005) described reading as a process whereby one looks at and comprehends what has been written. Anthony (2015) defined reading as a cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to arrive at meaning. All these suggest that reading is an active process of constructing meanings of words. Getrude (2015) asserted that reading is a way of understanding the printed words or symbols. Brown (2016) opined that reading is the act of knowing the mind of the author. Bright (2018) viewed reading as the identification of symbols and association of appropriate meaning with them. Some people never had opportunity to attend a formal school, a few others were out of school at very early stages, while some other ones are new in a foreign land. These categories of people have to learn some basic language elements in order to be able to read, write and become vast in academic pursuit. This is what the adult basic skill programme is all about.

Adult learning, Andragogy, is important in the teaching of adult learners. It is fascinating because it helps learners build their self-esteem and confidence as they study. Adults are self-sufficient, naturally driven, goal-oriented, and have a wealth of experience that a competent educator must draw upon to achieve goals. It might be tough for them to stay motivated because of the additional difficulties that come with adult learners' ages and skill levels. According to Stevens (2021), these

difficulties include financial constraints, self-doubt, adaptability, the need for value for money, and a reliance on a welcoming group. Good reading comprehension requires a basic understanding of phonics and decoding. Yet some adults have trouble understanding text and sophisticated language. Some learners also struggle with reading and learning problems like reading difficulties, failure to decode words etc. which make learning to read fundamentally difficult. Also, some learners experience problems with their senses (hearing and vision) due to aging.

Despite these difficulties, it is crucial to study English language, an official language in Nigeria. English is a cut across subject and a language of instruction across all educational levels. English language as a subject of study focuses essentially on the following components: speech, reading comprehension, grammar/structure, lexis, syntax, summary, and composition writing. Performance of students in each of these aspects is used in determining students' success in the language. English language has become one way of ascertaining students' achievement in schools, for the teacher to successfully teach the language, the four language skills are to be emphasized in every learning situation. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Osikomaiya, 2013a). Reading, one of the language skills, is the preoccupation of this study.

Reading skills is an active process that involves not only search for information but also reformation, summarizing, confirmation or rejection and criticizing where applicable. Osikomaiya (2019) said reading is one vital skill of communication that enables readers to turn written symbols into meaning and achieve the goal of comprehension, fluency and independence. Reading is the most important activity at any educational level, not only as a source of information but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's idea and knowledge of language. Osikomaiya (2013b) discovered that reading is the bedrock of all academic activities that helps in transfer of knowledge to other

school subjects. According to Kruidenier (2002) in Osikomaiya (2017), reading is an active process, and the reader must interact and be engaged with the text for it to work well. For comprehension to take place, words are decoded and associated with their meanings in the reader's memory, phrases and sentences are processed rapidly or fluently enough so that the meaning derived from words, phrases or sentences are not lost before the next is processed.

Reading is "a complex system of deriving meaning from print" and necessitates a variety of skills including decoding (word identification), fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, active comprehension tactics, and motivation to read. Numerous opportunities to work, training, higher education, and lifelong learning are opened through reading skills. When trying to earn a liveable income to support their children's education, and actively participate in political and community life, adults who struggle with reading encounter significant obstacles. To overcome this in adult learners, the teacher should initially focus on single letter graphemes that represent consonants or vowels before joining them to form simple words like go, seat, and fat, and so on. As learning progresses, more graphemes can be joined to create phonemes, and phonemes can also be joined to create words.

Reading is essential to education; the cornerstone upon which all academic growth rests, and it is more crucial to the sustainability of education. Sustainable learning is simply defined as "learning that lasts" (Graham, Berman, and Bellert, 2015). This refers to knowledge that will be relevant for a very long time and will likely inspire learners to continue their education throughout their lives. This is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote learning". According to Hays and Reinders (2020), learners should be inspired to make positive contributions to society through sustainable learning and education. Three factors make up sustainability: preservation of the

environment, preservation of economic life, and observance of particular social norms about human growth. Sustainable development is founded in the goal of the well-being and welfare of the people and considers both the requirements of present and future generations (Ahenkan and Oseikojo, 2014).

Adult learners embrace jobs and put in long hours to support their families and boost their lives but in spite of lacking fundamental skills, many of them have acquired interactive skills which permit them to function maximally within the society. They do, however, have optimism for the future and think that education will give them opportunities to better their lives. They are aware that they need to cope with achieving educational objectives which requires assistance. Some of them are not mindful of how much poor reading skills prevent them to develop academically, the acquisition of reading in learners' daily lives is important for overall development. Therefore, this paper sought to assess the impact of the programme on participants' reading skills and the challenges of reading skills in learners of Adult Basic Education programme.

Reading is a way of understanding the printed words or symbols. It is the identification of symbols and association of appropriate meaning with them. Adult learners with limited basic reading skills will have problems with comprehension ability of texts and multifaceted language learning especially in a second language situation. It is germane for individuals to be equipped with language skills to take the right career pathways, acquire skills, and function maximally in public and social systems. Study of adult learners has shown that vocabulary knowledge and reading fluency aids reading comprehension ability. These skills, together with interpretation are important for adults for building on advanced reading skills and decode texts in contexts. Some adult learners struggle with cognitive problems of connecting letters to sounds, confusion in reading, writing, comprehension, and fluency.

Therefore, this study sought to assess the impact of adult basic programme of learners on reading skills.

The main objectives of the study are to determine the impacts of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme and determine the gender difference in respondents' perception of the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme. The research was guided with this research question, what is the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant gender difference in respondents' perception of the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme.

Research Design

This study adopted the survey research design. Questionnaire was used to get information about the impacts and challenges of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme. It involved collecting data from a sample of participants who were learners in the Adult Basic Education programme in Lagos State. The study collected primary data through self-administered questionnaire distributed to participants. The questionnaire consisted of items related to the impacts and challenges of reading skills on participants who were learners in the Adult Basic Education programme.

Population

The targeted population for this study comprised of all learners in the Adult Basic Education programme in Lagos State. The reason for the choice of this group of people is partly because they have benefited

from the Adult Basic Education programme organised by Lagos State Government.

Sample and sampling Technique

The Multistage sampling procedure was used in the selection of the participants. The convenience or accidental sampling technique was first used to detect the targeted group and the snowball technique was later used to select 546 participants across six major zones in Lagos State.

Instrumentation

The instrument for this study was an adapted questionnaire from the work of Jinna and Maikano (2014) titled 'The role of adult education in national development'. The instrument was titled Reading Skills in Adult Basic Education Questionnaire (RADBEQ); divided into three sections. Section A consisted of personal information about the respondents; Section B consisted of statement items concerning the impacts of reading skills on learners of Adult Basic Education programme while Section C consisted of statement on challenges of reading skills on participants who were learners in the Adult Basic Education programme. The statements were rated on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Scores were 4, 3, 2, 1, for SA, A, D and SD respectively for positively worded items while the reverse was the case for negatively worded items. To ensure validity of the instrument, the research instrument was vetted by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, the Department that housed Adult Education and Tests and Measurement Units in the Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja. This was to ensure that the questionnaire items adequately covered all the component variables of the research question and hypothesis stated for the study. The 32 items instrument was then pilot tested in Sango-Ota

Area though in Ogun State but very close to Lagos State (it is a border town). The reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha's measure and the instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.89. Therefore, the instrument was generally regarded as valid and reliable.

Procedure for Data Collection

The study collected primary data using the self-administered questionnaire described above. The researchers engaged the services of two trained assistants to help with the administration and collection of the instrument. The research assistants were adequately briefed on the modes of administration and retrieval of the questionnaire. Data were collected by on-the-spot administration and completion of the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

To make meaningful deductions, the data collected were statistically analysed using descriptive statistics, which involve simple frequency count, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation to answer research question and inferential statistics of t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The research question was answered using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. The mean score values were rated as very low ($\bar{x} \leq 1.0$), low ($\bar{x} \leq 2.0$), high ($\bar{x} \leq 3.0$), and very high ($\bar{x} \leq 4.0$). The hypothesis was tested using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis and Results

Research Question One: What is the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme.

s/n	Items	SD(%)	D(%)	A(%)	SA(%)	Mean	SD
1	I developed a good reading comprehension through adult education programme	44 (8.1)	120 (22.0)	173 (31.7)	209 (38.3)	3.00	0.96
2	I developed basic understanding and decoding of phonics through adult education programme	43 (7.9)	99 (18.1)	143 (26.2)	261 (47.8)	3.19	0.99
3	I am able to read Nigerian official language fluently through adult education programme	33 (6.0)	87 (15.9)	152 (27.8)	274 (50.2)	3.22	0.92
4	I am able to speak Nigerian official language fluently through adult education programme	32 (5.9)	98 (17.9)	165 (30.2)	251 (46.0)	3.16	0.92
5	I am able to carry out simple computer numeracy through adult education programme	55 (10.1)	77 (14.1)	139 (25.5)	275 (50.4)	3.16	1.01
6	I am able to construct simple grammar structure through adult	32 (5.9)	87 (15.9)	143 (26.2)	284 (52.0)	3.24	0.93

	education programme						
7	I am able to comprehend simple lexis through adult education programme	33 (6.0)	66 (12.1)	132 (24.2)	315 (57.7)	3.34	0.91
8	I am able to comprehend simple syntax in English through adult education programme	54 (9.9)	99 (18.1)	110 (20.1)	283 (51.8)	3.14	1.04
9	I am able to make simple summary of speeches through adult education programme	55 (10.1)	97 (17.8)	120 (22.0)	274 (50.2)	3.12	1.03
10	I am able to write simple composition writing through adult education programme	55 (10.1)	108 (19.8)	87 (15.9)	296 (54.2)	3.14	1.06
11	Adult education programme improved my confidence to take on a leadership position	55 (10.1)	98 (17.9)	121 (22.2)	272 (49.8)	3.12	1.03
12	Adult education programme provided me with more opportunities for other training	76 (13.9)	88 (16.1)	110 (20.1)	272 (49.8)	3.06	1.10
13	Adult education programme improved my interest in learning	66 (12.1)	87 (15.9)	121 (22.2)	272 (49.8)	3.01	1.06

14	Adult education programme helped me in creating new knowledge	33 (6.0)	87 (15.9)	119 (21.8)	307 (56.2)	3.28	0.94
15	Adult education programme helped me in making rational reaction other people write-up	32 (5.9)	55 (10.1)	154 (28.2)	305 (55.9)	3.34	0.88
16	Adult education programme gave me the ability to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written text to participate in society	22 (4.0)	76 (13.9)	119 (21.8)	329 (60.3)	3.38	0.87
17	Adult education programme gave me the ability to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written text to achieve my goals	43 (7.9)	76 (13.9)	109 (20.0)	318 (58.)	3.29	0.98
18	Adult education programme gave me the ability to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written text to develop my knowledge and potentials	44 (8.1)	98 (17.9)	85 (15.6)	319 (58.4)	3.24	1.01
19	Adult education programme provided me	55 (10.1)	98 (17.9)	96 (17.6)	297 (54.4)	3.16	1.04

	functional literacy education						
20	Adult education programme provided me remedial education	44 (8.1)	98 (17.9)	77 (14.1)	327 (59.9)	3.26	1.02
21	Adult education programme provided me with in-service and on-the-job vocational and professional training in order to improve my skills	33 (6.0)	65 (11.9)	107 (19.6)	341 (62.5)	3.38	0.92
22	Adult education programme provided me with aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment	33 (6.0)	76 (13.9)	88 (16.1)	349 (63.9)	3.38	0.94
23	Adult education programme equipped me with everything I need for life in order to be relevant to society by helping to solve some of its problems	44 (8.1)	87 (15.9)	118 (21.6)	297 (54.4)	3.22	0.99
24	Adult education programme provided me role in promoting personal, social and economic well-being	32 (5.9)	76 (13.9)	186 (43.1)	252 (46.2)	3.21	0.89
25	Adult education programme provided me	44 (8.1)	76 (13.9)	140 (25.6)	286 (52.4)	3.22	0.97

	potentials to create personal, economic and social value						
26	Adult education programme improved my employability and income level	22 (4.0)	77 (14.1)	183 (33.5)	264 (52.4)	3.26	0.85
27	Adult education programme helps to transform and sustain my health	87 (15.9)	98 (17.9)	110 (20.1)	251 (46.0)	2.96	1.13
28	Adult education programme improved my state of civic	77 (14.1)	87 (15.9)	140 (25.6)	242 (44.3)	3.00	1.08
29	Adult education programme provided me opening minds and generally link me to increased racial tolerance, a reduction in political cynicism and a higher inclination towards democratic attitudes	44 (8.1)	55 (10.1)	77 (14.1)	370 (67.8)	3.42	0.96
30	Progression into other learning is an important outcome of adult education	32 (5.9)	66 (12.1)	121 (22.2)	327 (59.9)	3.36	0.91
31	Adult education has been cited as a key in reducing poverty levels around the world	65 (11.9)	87 (15.9)	108 (19.8)	286 (52.4)	3.13	1.07

32	Adult education programme empowered role necessary in times of crises, providing a stable community, a chance for reorientation, a safe place and social recognition	54 (9.9)	88 (16.1)	121 (22.2)	283 (51.8)	3.16	1.03
Grand Value						3.20	0.98

Research question one was to find out the impact of reading skills on participants who learners in Adult Basic Education programme are. Items explored ranged from the development of a good reading comprehension through adult education programme to empowerment role made necessary in times of crises, providing a stable community, a chance for reorientation, a safe place and social recognition through adult education programme. The aggregate mean rating of respondents' responses to the item statement stood at 3.20 which can be approximated to 3.0 which stand for agreement with the question.

Testing the Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant gender difference in respondents' perception of the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in Adult Basic Education programme.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of respondents' perception of the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in adult basic education programme based on gender.

	Gender	N	Means	Std Dev.	Std Error Means
Impacts of Reading in Adult Basic Education	Male	274	104.2482	9.85855	.59558
	Female	272	100.9449	8.11726	.49218

Table 3: t-test analysis of respondents' perception of the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in adult basic education programme based on gender.

Gender	F	Sig	t	df	Mean Diff	Std. Err. Diff	Decision
Equal var. assumed	1350	.24	4.272	544	3.30332	.77317	Accept H_0
Equal var. not assumed		6	4.275	526.049	3.30332	.77263	

Tables 2 and 3 show that the Calculated t-value is (4.272) with P-value of 0.25 computed at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the Calculated P-value was greater than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was hereby not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant gender difference in respondents' perception of the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in adult basic education programme.

Discussion of Findings

This study was able to establish that the impact of reading skills on participants who are learners in adult basic education programme was high. This agrees with the findings of Apena (2019) and Hannon (2014) who asserted that there is no gender difference in adult learners' performances and also attributed adult learners' performances in reading and numeracy which form the basis of their learning to quality of facilitators in learning centres across the state. The authors maintained that good, competent, and hard, working facilitators make very high impact on learners' skills.

The findings support the view of Olubodun and Apena (2023) who discovered that adult learners reading skill functionality is encouraged and promoted in recent times unlike in the past when it was faced with ageism factors which often pose as hindrance to both

acquisition and usage of reading skills in the society. This tremendous change has reduced illiteracy to a large extent in Lagos state.

However, these findings conflict with those of Reilly, Nuemann, and Andrews (2018) who observed that females outperform males on tasks of verbal and language abilities. The authors noted that at all levels of the ability distribution; females significantly did better than males in reading achievement. This is also supported by Osikomaiya, (2019). Also, these findings are at variance with those of Gedik and Akyol (2022) who observed that learners' having many challenges in word recognition and fluent reading often negatively have low rate of comprehension.

Conclusion

This study assessed the impact of reading skills on adult learners participating in the adult basic education programme. The findings revealed that the programme significantly improved participants' reading comprehension, fluency, and overall literacy skills, enabling them to engage more effectively in societal and economic activities. The results demonstrated that structured reading instruction, particularly phonics-based and learner-centred approaches, played a crucial role in enhancing learners' abilities to decode words, understand texts, and apply their skills in real-life contexts. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as limited prior education, socioeconomic barriers, and age-related learning difficulties persist. The study underscores the importance of the programmes in fostering lifelong learning, reducing illiteracy, and empowering adults to achieve personal and professional growth. To sustain and amplify these benefits, stakeholders must strengthen advocacy, improve facilitator training, and expand access to remote and marginalized populations. By doing so, the programmes can further align with Sustainable Development Goal 4, ensuring inclusive and quality education for all.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- a. Stakeholders should increase advocacy on adult basic education to reach people in remote place and the disadvantaged group. Also, adult basic education should be promoted, and adults should be encouraged to improve their educational attainment through the programme.
- b. Phonics and decoding instruction should be incorporated into adult basic education Curriculum. Since many adult learners struggle with basic decoding and phonemic awareness, adult basic education programmes should deliberately include structured phonics-based instruction. Facilitators should start with simple graphemes and gradually build up to more complex phoneme constructions to improve reading fluency and comprehension among adult learners.
- c. Provision of professional development/ workshop/ seminars for adult learner facilitators. Adult learners come with diverse backgrounds and challenges; hence, facilitators in adult basic education programmes should be trained regularly on andragogical methods, and teaching strategies.

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