

## **UTILIZATION OF BASIC LITERACY PROGRAMME IN IMPROVING THE LIVELIHOOD OF RURAL WOMEN IN ENUGU EAST SENATORIAL ZONE**

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<b>Keywords:</b> Basic Literacy, Women, Rural Women, Livelihood.	<b>ABSTRACT:</b> This study investigated utilization of basic literacy programme in improving the livelihood of rural women in Enugu East Senatorial zone. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was Enugu East Senatorial Zone. The population for the study was 72, 237 rural women who participated in functional literacy programmes. Taro Yamane sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of 480 respondents. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Basic Literacy Programmes and Improved Livelihood of Rural Women Questionnaire (BLPILRWQ)." The Instrument was validated by three research experts. Two from the Department of Adult and Continuing Education while one expert was from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education, Measurement and Evaluation unit. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to compute the internal consistency of the instrument. A total of 461 out of 480 copies were distributed but 461 copies were returned. The return rate was 96%. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study reveals that basic literacy programme, to a great extent improved the livelihood of rural women in Enugu East Senatorial Zone. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that government should partner with non-governmental agencies and other stakeholders to encourage women to participate more in various functional literacy programmes in order to improve their welfare and sustain their livelihood.
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### **Introduction**

Women need essential means of livelihood particularly rural women who in most cases are regarded as the poorest of the poor notwithstanding their role in development. Rural women are key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economy, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crisis and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide. Participation of rural women in shaping laws, policies and programmes on all issues that affect their lives including improved food and nutrition, security and better rural livelihoods will go a long way

in improving their livelihood. Training equips them with skills to pursue new livelihood and adapt technologically to their need. Women play a key role in food production and form a large proportion of the agricultural work force globally United Nations (UN) (2021).

Livelihood is a set of activities necessary for everyday life activities such as provision of basic necessities of life.

The Rural women are those women who live in the villages or interior communities. The majority of the poor live in rural areas and about 70% are women. In spite of the tremendous contribution of women to development, rural women in Africa continue to suffer invisibility, poor health, low level of formal education, income and limited access to infrastructural development. They also dominate in self-scale agriculture. Ukwuaba (2013), reported that rural women have been key actors in solving major issues on the developmental agenda, including the need to

manage the environment in a sustainable manner, control the exploding rate of population and urbanization, ensure food security, provide human needs with regards to health, promote education and literacy and eliminate poverty. Despite these, Nigerian women's access to formal education is still being constrained due to their unfair workload within the household division of labour.

Rural women refers to those women who reside or live in the rural areas. Rural women play a key role in supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition, security, generating income, improving rural livelihoods and overall wellbeing. They contribute to agriculture and rural enterprises and fuel local and global economy. Rural women are less likely to be wage earners, and when they do they earn less than men (Ukwuaba, 2012). Rural women are often concentrated in low-skilled, low-productivity and low or unpaid jobs with long working hours, poor working conditions and limited social protection (United Nations, 2021). Rural women are key agents for achieving the transformation economic, environmental and social changes. Health care and education are among the many challenges they face, which are further aggravated by challenges. Empowering them is key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also to overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide (UN, 2021). According to Omodia (2017) rural women are active agents of economic, social and environmental protection who are in many ways and to various degrees, constrained in their roles as farmers, producers, investors, caregivers and consumers. Rural women form the backbone of the agricultural labour force across most of the developing countries. Bruce and Demasson (2017), stated that rural women constitute the social and economic environment of the total population.

Rural women play crucial roles in ensuring food and nutrition, security, eradicating rural poverty and improving the well-being of their families yet continue to face stereotypes discrimination that deny them equitable access to opportunities, resources, assets and services (Oyebamiji and Adekola, 2015). It is therefore important to empower women to obtain skills that will enable to survive in the challenging times. Basic literacy according to Ukwuaba, (2015), is referred to as the skills of reading, writing and numeracy. In all communities, the individuals belong to various categories and backgrounds and are engaged in different

occupations. Whether the women are engaged in employment or are required to manage the household responsibilities, it is essential for them to possess the basic literacy skills. In rural communities, there have been establishment of training centres, which impart basic literacy skills to women, who have dropped out prematurely or have not been enrolled in schools before. Acquisition of basic literacy skills are regarded to be of utmost significance to enrich the overall quality of lives of these rural women as they will be able to read and write, and be informed. If women gain basic literacy, they will be able to read pamphlets about healthy life practices to elongate one's health, they can interpreted prescriptions by pharmacists to avoid taking overdose, these will help preserve their lives, this is where health literacy comes to play.

Basic literacy skills are referred to as the skills of reading, writing and numeracy. In all communities the individuals belong to various categories and backgrounds are engaged in different occupations. Whether the individuals are engaged in employment or are required to manage the household responsibilities Olaniyi (2020) asserts that the notion of basic literacy is used for the initial learning of reading and writing which adults who have never been to school need to go through. The international council for Adult Education cited in Olaniyi (2020) further expanded this by explaining basic literacy to be a form of learning to read and write (text and numbers), reading and writing to learn, and developing these skills and using them effectively for meeting basic needs.

#### **Basic Literacy Programmes and Improved Livelihood of Rural Women**

According to Egunyomi (2009) education is a means of releasing man from the chains of ignorance to the true form of knowledge and ideas. It has to do with various activities and processes aimed at, developing the individuals knowledge, attitude, values and understanding of what is required in all walks of life. To reinforce this, the United Nation (2005) pointed out that education is the basis for full promotion and improvement, of the status of people and that education should be geared towards the development of society. Education can be seen as a means of gaining knowledge and ability, by which one can transform the world and maximize individual liberation. This suggest, that knowledge gained in the process of education, should be a means of understanding and critically analyzing social, political and economic forces thereby, raising the level of individuals' consciousness for their betterment.

In the same vein, Human Right Report (2011) asserted that, the most fundamental prerequisite for empowering people especially women for development in all spheres of the society is education and that, people without education lose the opportunity to improve their lives. This is true because education is an important tool for improvement of women, as it empowers them to face challenging situations and opportunity, to fight against traditional harmful practices that are repugnant to natural justice and equity. Education is therefore a tool that liberates man from bondage to freedom and from darkness to light. According to Arikpo (2007) education is the easiest and surest way of creating and expanding opportunities for all in Nigeria.

Educating a woman means educating the entire nation, this is true because the educated woman can adopt the best family method to control the size of her family, enhance her children's health and reduce infant mortality rate. In the same vein, Anjali and Snigdha (2007) reported that education gives them equal opportunity with men in decision-making positions in political and economic fields, improvement of women through education opens up better entrepreneurial opportunities for them. This is true because, improvement of women through education go a long way to making changes not only in the image women have of themselves, but also the roles that they play within the society. Similarly, Gaidanu (2008) reported that education is an indispensable tool for the improvement of life of people. When education is inculcated into the community, its aim is to produce people who can choose for themselves the kind of development and self actualization, they want to undertake.

In the light of this Erim, Akpama and Asor (2011) asserted that education is used to prepare people for social, civil, political and economic role that goes beyond the limit of elementary literacy training, which basically has to do with reading and writing. This is why individuals, families, church communities and even the entire nation embrace cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage. Denga (1999) observed that Nigeria educational system, is in a state of serious crisis and rapid state of collapse because of inadequate school facilities, resulting in poor performance of teachers, students and pupils at all levels.

Byron (2008) reported that many researchers have sought to examine if religion hamper or indeed enhance educational attainment, eighty four percent of

the studies reviewed found out that, there is significant relationship between religious activities and improved educational attainment. The scholar further stated that higher level of religious involvement has a relationship with increased level of educational attainment, wellbeing, hope and meaningful life. According to Berger (2003) community-based organisations carry out enlightenment campaigns to expose women to the benefits of education, which may help in their day to day business and interaction, within the environment. In the same vein, Tadros (2007) reported that community-based organisations often organize adult literacy classes, for illiterate women to learn how to read and write.

Similarly, Cavendish (2000) asserted that in the United States, Community-based organisations organise income generating programmes periodically, to enable members raise capital for renovation of schools in their communities, such capital are raised either through church offerings, membership dues, levies, donations, revolving loan funds etc. Community-based organisations to a great extent contribute to educational development, by fostering the need for the less privileged women to be enrolled, in educational activities, award of scholarship and equipping of libraries.

In support of the above assertion Demerah and Peter (2009) stated that in the United States community-based organisations are engaged in providing scholarships, to deserving members, equipping schools and setting up as well as maintaining day care and nursery schools. They further reported that most of the school drop outs are children from poor homes, whose parents are predominantly farmers and petty traders, majority of the people who are willing to go to school but do not have sponsors, are awarded scholarships by community-based organisations, like the Hope Foundation Organisation, Justice Development Peace Commission to mention but a few. These organisations also donate in kind such materials as, books, pen and chalk to adult literacy centres, in support of educational programmes. Tonnessen (2007) asserted that education is one of the most renowned activities provided by CBOs, according to him, education takes the form of:

- i. Complementing state education by providing extracurricular support
- ii. Providing regular seminars, workshops and programmes especially for adults.

Basic Literacy for women improves them socially, politically and economically. Literacy gives women the means to improve their economic status and subsequent standard of living, provides access to the power of written knowledge, provides skills and knowledge that has a direct relationship to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the family, leads to enhanced quality of life for their families and improved education outcomes for their children, gives voice in decision making, self-development and self-value; thus reducing marginalisation. Oyitso, & Olomukoro (2012) have observed, “Access to literacy is considered one of the main factors for empowerment particularly empowerment of those excluded from [a] formal system of education”

Basic literacy has been seen as a highly potent catalyst of cultural and societal change. Oyitso & Olomukoro (2012) has argued that increased female literacy is the key to benefits for society in general. A literate mother has the skills and knowledge to provide better child care and healthier children, understands the importance of providing balanced nutrition, comprehends the advantages of a small family norm, has the skills to promote learning and education, and can instill “in her offspring the right attitudes and behavior expected from them by the society”. Boliva (2010) stated that investing in women’s literacy carries very high returns: it improves livelihoods, leads to better child and maternal health, and favours girls’ access to education.

#### Research Question

1. What is the extent of utilization of basic literacy programme in improving the livelihood of rural women in Enugu East senatorial zone?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the Extent of basic literacy Programmes could be utilized in improving livelihood of rural women in Enugu East senatorial zone**

S/N	My participation in basic literacy programmes improved my basic skills such as:	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Mean	STD	DEC
1	reading skills	205	169	75	12	3.23	.81	Great Extent
2	writing skills	73	62	140	186	2.05	1.08	Low Extent
3	communication skills	224	134	58	45	3.16	.99	Great Extent
4	self-confidence skills	40	40	166	215	1.79	.93	Low Extent
5	high self-esteem skills	218	158	48	37	3.21	.93	Great Extent
6	skills in reading signs and poster	207	182	37	35	3.22	.89	Improved
	<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.78</b>	<b>.94</b>	<b>Great Extent</b>

The results of analysis in table 1 above shows that, the overall mean was 2.78 and .94 standard deviation. This

#### Hypothesis

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of younger and older rural women on the extent functional literacy programme can be utilized in improving the livelihood of rural women in Enugu East senatorial zone.

#### Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study

Sample and sampling Technique: The sample for the study was 480 rural women of Enugu senatorial zone comprising younger women (aged 18-35) and older rural women (aged 36 and above). The sample size was determined using “Taro Yamane” formula for a finite and large population as stated in Uzoagulu (2011). Furthermore, random sampling technique was used to select rural women from each of the six local government areas (Nkanu West, Nkanu East, Enugu North, Enugu South, Enugu East and Isi-Uzo) respectively, giving a total of 480 respondents for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire developed by the researcher.

Method of Data Analysis: For data analysis, weighted mean and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions. While the null hypotheses postulated for the study was tested using t-test statistics at .05 level of significance.

#### Result

##### Research Question One:

What is the influence of basic literacy programmes on improving livelihood of rural women in Enugu East senatorial zone?



means that, basic literacy programmes improve livelihood of rural women in Enugu East senatorial zone to a great extent..

#### **HO<sub>1</sub>:**

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of younger rural women (aged 18-35) and older rural women (aged 36 and above) on the extent basic literacy programmes to improved their livelihood in Enugu East senatorial zone.

**Table 2: T-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of younger and older rural women on the extent basic literacy programmes improved their livelihood in Enugu east senatorial zone.**

Basic literacy skills:	N	$\bar{x}$
S.D	t.	
Mean ratings of young women:	231	21.71
2.99		
8.220*		
Mean ratings of older women:	230	19.10
3.80		

\*significant at .05 level; df= 459; critical t-value =1.965

The results of analysis in table 5 above indicate that, the calculated t-value of 8.220 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.965 at 0.05 level of significance, with 459 degrees of freedom. This means that, there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of younger and older rural women on the extent basic literacy programmes improved their livelihood in Enugu east senatorial zone. The results further show that it was young rural women with mean ratings of ( $\bar{x}$ = 21.71), that to a great extent, basic literacy programmes to improved their livelihood in Enugu east senatorial zone than older rural women ( $\bar{x}$ = 19.10). That is, the younger the age of rural women, the better their extent of basic literacy skills in improving their livelihood in Enugu east senatorial zone.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

##### **Basic literacy skill and improved livelihood of rural women**

The results of the analysis of research question one revealed that basic literacy programmes to a great extent improved the livelihood of rural women in Enugu East Senatorial Zone. Therefore the result is in agreement with Ukwuaba, (2015), whostate that skills of reading, writing and numeracy in all communities, the individuals belong to various categories and backgrounds and are engaged in different occupations. Whether the women are engaged in employment or are required to manage the household responsibilities, it is

essential for them to possess the basic literacy skills. In rural communities, there have been establishment of training centres, which impart basic literacy skills to women, who have dropped out prematurely or have not been enrolled in schools before. Acquisition of basic literacy skills are regarded to be of utmost significance to enrich the overall quality of lives of these rural women as they will be able to read and write, and be informed. If women gains basic literacy, they will be able to read about scripts and articles about healthy life practices to elongate one's health, they can interpret prescriptions by pharmacists to void taking overdose, these will help preserve their life, this is where health literacy comes to play.

Basic literacy skills are referred to the skills of reading, writing and numerically. In all communities the individuals belong to various categories and backgrounds are engaged in different occupations. Whether the individuals are engaged in employment or are required to manage the household responsibilities. The findings is also in agreement with Olaniyi (2020) who asserts that the notion of basic literacy is used for the initial learning of reading and writing which adults who have never been to school need to go through. The international council for Adult Education cited in Olaniyi (2020) further expanded this by explaining basic literacy to be a form of learning to read and write (text and numbers), reading and writing to learn, and developing these skills and using them effectively for meeting basic needs.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the outcome of the findings, the study revealed that rural women in the study area improved their livelihood through basic literacy programmes. The study showed that basic literacy skills significantly improved the livelihood of rural women in Enugu East Senatorial zone. It is also concluded that younger rural women and older rural women do not differ significantly in their mean ratings and that basic literacy programme improved their livelihood in Enugu East Senatorial zone, Nigeria.

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were

1. Government should partner with non-governmental agencies and other stakeholders to encourage women to develop more interest towards participating in various functional literacy programmes in order to improve their welfare and sustain their livelihood.

2. Teachers should make friends with rural women attending functional literacy programmes and respect their titles in order for them to feel free to learn. They should also teach them according to their needs.

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