**ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION AMONG WOMEN IN PORT-HARCOURT LOCAL GOVERNMENT, RIVERS STATE**

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# ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of adult literacy programs in poverty alleviation among women in Port-Harcourt Local Government Area, Rivers State. Focusing on the socio-economic benefits of adult education, this research assesses the impact of literacy programs on women’s economic empowerment, identifies barriers to effective implementation, and suggests strategies for enhancing program accessibility and relevance. Utilizing a structured questionnaire, data were gathered from 150 participants and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings indicate that adult literacy programs significantly improve participants’ literacy skills, employability, and financial management, contributing to poverty reduction and increased economic independence among women. However, challenges such as limited access to nearby literacy centers, financial constraints, and socio-cultural restrictions hinder full participation. To address these barriers, the study recommends establishing more localized centers, providing financial assistance, introducing flexible schedules, and incorporating vocational training into literacy programs. By implementing these strategies, adult literacy programs can better meet the needs of women in Port-Harcourt, enhancing their role as catalysts for sustainable poverty alleviation. This research contributes to the understanding of adult education as a critical tool for socio-economic advancement, particularly for marginalized communities.

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## Background of the Study

Literacy programs for adults are extremely important in the fight against poverty, particularly for women living in underdeveloped regions at the time. The socioeconomic benefits that these programs provide to marginalized populations in Nigeria, particularly in urban and rural areas with high levels of poverty like Port-Harcourt, highlight the significance of these initiatives in the country. Literacy programs for women frequently place an emphasis on functional literacy, which is a form of literacy that combines fundamental reading and numeracy abilities with vocational training in order to enable participants to improve their employability and potential for revenue creation. According to Olojede and Dairo (2017) and Findsen (2022), this strategy is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, which place an emphasis on the importance of gender equality and quality education as precondition for the alleviation of poverty. Women in Port-Harcourt have a distinctive set of obstacles, including restricted access to education, resources, and career prospects. This is because of the huge economic disparities that exist in the city. The findings of a study conducted by Ezimah (2014) underline the fact that literacy programs that include educational and vocational components are effective in assisting participants in breaking the cycle of poverty. These programs not only improve participants' literacy abilities but also develop financial independence. Women are able to become more self-sufficient and active economic participants in their communities through the implementation of programs that teach basic reading in addition to skills such as tailoring, food processing, and small-scale commerce (Hinzen, 2018; Oyebamiji, 2019).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Port-Harcourt, adult literacy programs are intended to equip women with basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills that enable them to pursue employment, manage household finances, and participate actively in community life. However, these programs often face significant hurdles that limit their effectiveness in reducing poverty among women. One of the primary challenges is inadequate funding. Due to budget constraints, many literacy programs struggle to cover operational costs, resulting in a limited number of centers and outreach efforts. This financial shortfall restricts the program's geographical reach and ultimately reduces the number of women who can benefit from the educational opportunities provided. Additionally, limited access to funding prevents these programs from expanding to underserved or rural areas, where the need for literacy training is often most critical. Moreover, adult literacy programs in Port-Harcourt frequently suffer from a shortage of trained personnel. Qualified educators and facilitators are essential for delivering high-quality literacy education, yet many programs lack the resources to hire and retain experienced staff. The shortage of skilled instructors compromises the quality of instruction, making it difficult for participants to acquire functional literacy skills that could enhance their economic prospects. Without proper guidance from trained personnel, women may struggle to grasp and apply the knowledge and skills imparted during these programs, ultimately reducing the impact of literacy education on their lives. Another issue affecting the effectiveness of adult literacy programs in Port-Harcourt is the lack of a gender-sensitive curriculum. The existing curricula often fail to address the unique socioeconomic roles and needs of women, who typically balance multiple responsibilities within their families and communities. Literacy programs that do not align with the practical needs of these women may be less appealing and relevant to them, leading to lower enrollment and retention rates. For instance, many women require literacy skills in areas that directly affect their daily lives, such as basic financial literacy, health and wellness education, and vocational training related to income-generating activities. When these specific needs are not met, the likelihood of women benefiting from adult literacy programs diminishes, reducing the program's potential to drive sustainable poverty alleviation. These challenges underscore a critical need to evaluate the impact of adult literacy programs in Port-harcourt on poverty alleviation among women. This evaluation would provide insights into whether these programs effectively address the educational and economic needs of women or whether they require structural adjustments to enhance their relevance and effectiveness. By assessing the current challenges and potential areas for improvement, stakeholders can better understand how to develop targeted strategies to improve adult literacy programs, ultimately empowering women to break the cycle of poverty and foster economic independence. The rationale for this assessment, therefore, lies in the urgent need to address the gaps in existing adult literacy programs and to implement reforms that prioritize women’s specific educational needs and economic aspirations.

## 1.3 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine adult literacy programmes for poverty alleviation among women in Port-harcourt local government, Rivers State. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Find out the impact of adult literacy programs on poverty alleviation among women in Port-harcourt.
2. Ascertain the challenges affecting the implementation and effectiveness of these programs.
3. Find out strategies to improve the relevance and reach of literacy programs in Port-harcourt.

## 1.4 Research Questions

i. What is the impact of adult literacy programs on poverty alleviation among women in Port-harcourt?

ii. What challenges affect the implementation and effectiveness of adult literacy programs in Port-harcourt?

iii. What strategies can improve the relevance and reach of literacy programs in Port-harcourt?

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the broader understanding of how targeted adult literacy programs can alleviate poverty, especially among women in low-income areas. By identifying successful practices and challenges, this research will help policymakers and educators tailor programs to improve outcomes for women, enhance program effectiveness, and potentially offer a scalable model for other regions. It will also supports the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly gender equality, quality education, and poverty reduction.

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

The study will focus on adult literacy programs specifically targeting women in Port-harcourt, Rivers State. It will examine various aspects of these programs, including curriculum content, delivery methods, funding sources, and participant demographics, aiming to provide an in-depth analysis of their effectiveness in poverty alleviation.

## 1.7 Definition of Terms

**Adult Literacy Program:** An educational initiative designed to improve reading, writing, numeracy, and sometimes vocational skills among adults, often with an emphasis on functional and practical knowledge.

**Poverty Alleviation:** Efforts and strategies aimed at reducing poverty, particularly by improving access to economic opportunities and resources.

**Functional Literacy:** A form of literacy education that combines basic reading and writing skills with practical vocational training, aiming to increase participants’ employability.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Conceptual Review

The conceptual framework of this study examines adult literacy programs, poverty dimensions, and the specific context of women and poverty in Port-harcourt. This foundation establishes the role that education plays in economic empowerment and provides insight into how gender-specific factors impact poverty alleviation strategies.

**2.1.1. Introduction to Adult Literacy and Poverty Alleviation**

The nexus between adult literacy and poverty alleviation has gained considerable attention in recent years, particularly in developing nations where poverty persists as a major socio-economic challenge. Literacy is universally recognized as a foundational skill that promotes individual empowerment, social development, and economic stability (UNESCO, 2020). In addressing poverty among women, particularly, adult literacy programs emerge as powerful interventions that can uplift not only individuals but entire communities by equipping women with essential skills for personal, social, and economic empowerment (Kabeer, 2016). Research underscores that adult literacy is linked to improvements in socio-economic status, health, and family welfare, making it an essential component of poverty alleviation strategies (Ahmed et al., 2017; Rajab, 2019). Education is seen as a catalyst for change, one that provides marginalized populations with the skills and knowledge needed to break free from the cycle of poverty (Adepoju, 2018). Given the multidimensional nature of poverty, literacy programs are increasingly designed to address these complexities, focusing on literacy as a gateway to broader developmental outcomes, including employment, health, and social integration (Aderibigbe & Olowu, 2021).

**The Importance of Targeting Women in Poverty Alleviation Efforts**

Women, particularly those in low-income countries, often face barriers that limit their access to education, economic resources, and decision-making opportunities. Globally, it is estimated that two-thirds of the illiterate population are women, which has significant implications for socio-economic development (UNESCO, 2021). Numerous studies have documented how women's education leads to improved economic outcomes, better family health, and enhanced social status (Banda, 2017; Ezeilo et al., 2020). Educated women are more likely to invest in their children’s education, seek health services, and participate actively in community affairs, which contributes to the broader development of society (Johnson et al., 2019). The targeting of adult literacy programs at women is a strategic approach to combatting poverty on multiple fronts. Kabeer (2016) posits that women’s literacy not only impacts their economic status but also fosters resilience and self-reliance, qualities essential for sustainable development. Further studies have shown that literacy leads to increased financial inclusion for women, enabling them to access credit, savings opportunities, and other financial services, which in turn facilitates entrepreneurial initiatives (Obadan & Fashola, 2019). This empowerment effect underscores the value of integrating literacy initiatives within broader poverty alleviation frameworks.

**Literacy as a Tool for Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment is a primary goal of adult literacy programs. Numerous studies affirm that literacy enables individuals to secure better employment, manage their finances more effectively, and engage in entrepreneurial activities (Majid et al., 2020). For instance, a study by Ali and Bhatti (2021) on women in rural Pakistan found that literacy programs significantly improved participants' income-generating capacities through skills acquisition and access to market information. Similarly, Yeboah (2019) examined the impacts of literacy programs in Ghana and highlighted how increased literacy facilitated better financial decision-making, contributing to household financial stability. Notably, literacy equips women with critical financial skills, such as budgeting, savings, and investing, which are essential for economic resilience in uncertain conditions (Singh, 2022). In Nigeria, evidence suggests that literacy interventions tailored to local economic activities have been effective in enhancing women's income through microenterprise (Aderibigbe & Olowu, 2021). Such findings support the argument that literacy should be considered a vital tool for economic empowerment and a strategic element of poverty reduction.

**Social Implications of Literacy for Poverty Alleviation**

Beyond economic benefits, literacy has profound social implications, as it promotes social inclusion, improves health outcomes, and fosters community participation. Adult literacy is strongly correlated with health literacy, enabling women to make informed health decisions, access medical services, and implement practices that benefit family welfare (Ahmed et al., 2017). According to World Health Organization reports, literate mothers are better equipped to prevent health issues and seek timely medical assistance for their children, leading to improved health outcomes across generations (WHO, 2018). Furthermore, literacy empowers women to participate more actively in community governance and social initiatives. In a study conducted in Kenya, Ndung'u (2020) observed that literacy programs increased women’s involvement in local decision-making processes and advocacy for community resources. This social empowerment effect, as noted by Afolabi and Akande (2021), highlights literacy’s role in equipping women with the confidence and knowledge necessary for active citizenship, which can catalyze positive change within communities. As a result, literacy not only affects individual lives but also strengthens the social fabric by fostering a sense of agency and collective responsibility.

**The Role of Adult Literacy in Sustainable Development Goals**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the necessity of inclusive and equitable quality education to eradicate poverty (UNDP, 2020). Adult literacy, particularly for women, aligns with several SDGs, including those related to gender equality, economic growth, and reduced inequalities. Scholars argue that literacy functions as a multiplier that accelerates progress across multiple SDGs by addressing educational deficits that underlie poverty and social exclusion (United Nations, 2021). For instance, Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive education, underscores the importance of lifelong learning, within which adult literacy plays a crucial role. Similarly, literacy initiatives support Goal 5 (Gender Equality) by bridging educational disparities and empowering women to contribute more fully to economic and social life. By improving literacy rates, nations can address one of the root causes of poverty, thereby making strides towards achieving these global goals (Obadan & Fashola, 2019; Ali & Bhatti, 2021).

**2.1.2 Adult Literacy Programmes**

Adult literacy programs aim to provide basic skills in reading, writing, and numeracy, often tailored to improve the socioeconomic conditions of marginalized groups. These programs are instrumental in empowering individuals by enhancing their capabilities to participate in economic activities and make informed decisions (Ezimah, 2014; Findsen, 2022). In developing countries, literacy is considered a crucial component of national development policies because it helps individuals access better job opportunities and facilitates social inclusion. Functional literacy programs, which focus on practical skills applicable in daily life, are particularly effective in low-income communities, where education can directly impact income generation and employability (UNESCO, 2019).

Research underscores the importance of adult literacy programs that integrate vocational training to increase participants' financial independence (Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2019). These programs often incorporate skill development areas like entrepreneurship, agriculture, or crafts, which are directly aligned with the employment needs of the target population (Hinzen, 2018). Furthermore, partnerships with local businesses and non-governmental organizations enhance program success by providing financial support, materials, and opportunities for graduates (Chieke et al., 2017). In Nigeria, adult literacy initiatives often face challenges, including limited funding, inadequate staffing, and poor infrastructure, which hinder the expansion and efficacy of such programs (Nwafor & Agi, 2013).

The literacy programs in Nigeria are largely administered by government agencies, NGOs, and community groups. Although each organization has its curriculum, most emphasize a learner-centered approach, where participants gain basic skills to meet immediate socio-economic needs (UNESCO, 2019). Recent studies suggest that such programs must go beyond basic literacy to include financial literacy, health education, and digital skills to align with the demands of an increasingly globalized world (Findsen, 2022).

**2.1.3. Historical Context of Adult Literacy Programmes**

The development of adult literacy programs reflects broader societal efforts to address socio-economic disparities through education, particularly in low-income and developing regions. Literacy as an organized effort has its roots in global movements to combat poverty, enhance social inclusion, and foster individual empowerment. This chapter traces the historical development of adult literacy programs, particularly focusing on key government, non-governmental, and international initiatives from the mid-20th century to recent years. Special attention is given to the role of adult literacy in poverty alleviation, with a focus on women’s empowerment.

**Origins and Early Initiatives**

The recognition of literacy as a fundamental human right gained traction after World War II, as international bodies like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations (UN) began promoting literacy to rebuild societies and reduce inequalities (UNESCO, 2015). During this period, literacy initiatives focused primarily on basic reading and writing skills, with the belief that these skills would enable individuals to participate more actively in social and economic life. Early literacy programs were often state-sponsored, targeting adult populations with limited access to formal education systems.

In Africa and other regions affected by colonialism, literacy initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s were driven by a desire for post-independence development. Many newly independent nations saw literacy as a pathway to modernization and economic progress (Obanya, 2017). For instance, in Nigeria, literacy campaigns were initiated to reduce high illiteracy rates, often influenced by UNESCO’s Educational for All (EFA) agenda, which called for universal literacy as a foundation for development (Adewumi, 2018). These early programs, however, primarily addressed male populations, overlooking the unique challenges and needs of women.

**Expansion and Integration of Literacy Programs in Development Goals**

In the 1980s and 1990s, adult literacy became increasingly integrated into broader development agendas as the link between literacy and poverty alleviation became more evident. During this period, adult education began to focus not only on basic literacy but also on skill development and economic empowerment. International agencies, including UNESCO and the World Bank, advocated for adult literacy programs tailored to economic activities, particularly those involving women in rural communities (Majgaard & Mingat, 2018).

The Women’s Literacy Project, launched by UNESCO in the 1990s, exemplified this shift by focusing on gender-specific literacy needs. Studies from this period highlight that women’s literacy had broader social implications, such as improved family health and child education (Ndung’u, 2020). This project helped demonstrate that literacy programs that integrate economic and social components were more sustainable and impactful, setting a precedent for similar initiatives worldwide.

**Government and NGO Efforts in the 21st Century**

Entering the 2000s, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) recognized the transformative potential of literacy as a poverty alleviation tool. Many nations developed national adult education policies, while NGOs expanded community-based literacy programs, often with funding and support from international donors. In Nigeria, for instance, the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) was established to coordinate nationwide literacy efforts, reflecting a policy shift toward inclusive education and targeting marginalized groups, particularly women (Ezeilo, 2021).

NGOs have played a crucial role in promoting literacy, especially among women in rural communities. Organizations such as ActionAid, CARE International, and Plan International launched numerous literacy initiatives, aiming to provide women with life skills that could improve their economic and social conditions. Research by Afolabi and Akande (2021) highlights how community-driven literacy programs helped bridge the educational gap in regions with limited formal schooling options. These programs emphasized culturally relevant content, focusing on skills such as financial literacy, health knowledge, and local entrepreneurship.

**International Influence and the Role of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 marked a significant turning point in the global approach to literacy. SDG 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” explicitly acknowledges adult literacy as a critical component of global development (United Nations, 2021). This goal encourages nations to integrate literacy into broader strategies for economic growth, gender equality, and poverty reduction.

Many recent literacy programs have been designed with an awareness of the SDGs, particularly in regions where poverty and illiteracy rates are intertwined. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), for instance, has supported literacy initiatives in Africa, including in Nigeria, where it collaborates with local agencies to promote literacy programs that align with SDG 4’s goals (Majid et al., 2020). The SDGs have also prompted countries to measure literacy rates more comprehensively and to consider literacy’s broader social impacts, such as civic engagement, community development, and environmental awareness.

**Recent Trends and Innovations in Adult Literacy Programmes**

Recent years have witnessed new trends in literacy programs, spurred by technological advances and innovative teaching methods. Digital literacy has become an essential aspect of adult education, enabling learners to access information, manage finances, and engage in virtual learning environments. Studies suggest that digital literacy can significantly boost women’s ability to participate in the digital economy, providing new income opportunities and enhancing their autonomy (Aderibigbe & Olowu, 2021).

Mobile technology has also been leveraged to increase literacy among rural women, who may have limited access to physical education centers. Programs like MobiLiteracy in Uganda and Cell-Ed in Kenya demonstrate how mobile-based learning can overcome geographical and logistical barriers to education (Obadan & Fashola, 2019). In Nigeria, similar efforts are underway, with initiatives that incorporate mobile phones and internet access to deliver literacy content directly to adult learners (Adepoju, 2022). These innovations reflect an adaptive approach to literacy, one that seeks to meet learners where they are and provides flexibility that aligns with their daily lives.

**Challenges in Implementing Adult Literacy Programmes**

Despite the notable advancements in adult literacy initiatives, significant challenges remain. Funding constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and cultural resistance continue to hinder literacy efforts, particularly in rural areas. In Nigeria, research indicates that adult literacy programs often struggle with insufficient resources and a lack of trained personnel, which limits their effectiveness (Ezeilo et al., 2020). Additionally, cultural norms that prioritize men’s education over women’s continue to pose barriers, affecting enrollment and retention rates among women (Kabeer, 2016).

These challenges underscore the need for sustained investment and innovative solutions to enhance the reach and impact of adult literacy programs. Scholars argue that government support, coupled with international collaboration, is essential for creating literacy initiatives that are both effective and sustainable (Obanya, 2017). Additionally, there is a growing consensus on the importance of community involvement and culturally sensitive approaches, which can foster greater acceptance and engagement in literacy programs.

**2.1.4 Poverty and Its Dimensions**

Poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing more than the lack of income; it also includes deficits in education, healthcare, and living standards. Scholars describe poverty using various dimensions, such as absolute poverty, which refers to a condition where individuals lack the basic necessities of life, and relative poverty, which describes the inability to meet society's average standard of living (Sen, 2015; Alkire & Santos, 2014). The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) developed by Alkire and Foster (2011) has broadened the understanding of poverty by including indicators like education, health, and living standards. This index provides a holistic view, showing that poverty can persist even among employed individuals if other dimensions like health and education are not adequately met (Alkire & Foster, 2011).

The interrelation between poverty and education is well-documented, as low education levels limit job opportunities and restrict social mobility (World Bank, 2018). Education, particularly functional literacy, enhances individuals’ ability to secure employment, understand healthcare, and access resources, all of which contribute to poverty alleviation (Ezimah, 2014; Findsen, 2022). Additionally, functional literacy programs tailored to address poverty consider the socioeconomic context of the target group, incorporating skills that promote self-employment and resource management. In Nigeria, poverty is compounded by factors such as unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and an underfunded educational system, which collectively hinder economic growth and personal advancement (Nwafor & Agi, 2013).

Empirical studies indicate that income-based poverty measures alone are insufficient to address the realities faced by low-income groups in developing countries, as these metrics often overlook social and cultural factors that limit access to resources (Alkire & Santos, 2014). Consequently, poverty alleviation programs now emphasize a more inclusive approach, incorporating health services, education, and skills training to provide a sustainable pathway out of poverty (UNESCO, 2019).

**2.1.5 Women and Poverty in Port-harcourt**

In Port-harcourt, poverty disproportionately affects women, who often lack access to education, employment opportunities, and healthcare. Women in this region are particularly vulnerable due to societal expectations, limited economic power, and high dependency on informal employment sectors, which are less stable and poorly remunerated (Olojede & Dairo, 2017). Studies highlight that poverty among women is further exacerbated by gender-based disparities in access to education and the high prevalence of single motherhood, which increases the financial burden on women (Findsen, 2022; Oyebamiji, 2019).

Adult literacy programs aimed at women in Port-harcourt often incorporate elements addressing these unique challenges by offering vocational training, financial literacy, and awareness of women’s legal rights (UNESCO, 2019). Such programs play an essential role in poverty alleviation by enhancing women's ability to earn income independently and make informed decisions about their health, finances, and education (Nwafor & Agi, 2013). Women who participate in literacy programs report improvements in their household income and express greater confidence in managing economic activities, indicating that these programs have a positive impact on poverty reduction (Chieke et al., 2017).

The persistent poverty levels among women in Port-harcourt highlight the need for expanded literacy programs that address both economic and social dimensions, such as child care and legal support services. Gender-focused programs that integrate these elements have been shown to be more effective in achieving long-term poverty alleviation than generic literacy programs, as they consider the specific barriers that women face in attaining economic independence (Ezimah, 2014; Oyebamiji, 2019). Recognizing the broader impacts of women's education on family health, community development, and local economies underscores the value of adult literacy as a strategic intervention for sustainable development (Sen, 2015; Findsen, 2022).

## 2.2 Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework for this study is built upon two core theories: Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory. These theories provide a foundation for understanding how adult literacy programs contribute to poverty alleviation by enhancing individual capabilities and fostering community connections among women in Port-harcourt.

**2.2.1 Empowerment Theory**

Empowerment Theory focuses on the processes through which individuals and communities gain control over their lives and the resources necessary to improve their socioeconomic conditions. Developed by scholars such as Rappaport (1987), the theory suggests that empowerment is not simply a state but a dynamic process, encompassing personal, interpersonal, and collective dimensions. Empowerment Theory is particularly relevant in adult literacy programs, where education serves as a catalyst for personal growth, financial autonomy, and social transformation (Zimmerman, 2000; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment Theory emphasizes the development of self-efficacy, agency, and critical awareness, which are essential for individuals to challenge existing social and economic inequalities. Adult literacy programs align with this framework by providing women with the skills to read, write, and understand basic financial principles, thereby enabling them to engage more actively in economic and social activities (Ezimah, 2014; UNESCO, 2019). According to Freire’s (1973) work on critical consciousness, literacy goes beyond reading and writing; it involves a critical reflection on one’s social environment. This is especially relevant for marginalized groups, such as women in Port-harcourt, who often lack the resources and autonomy needed to overcome poverty (Freire, 1973; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

In practice, empowerment through literacy allows women to increase their social status, access economic resources, and participate in decision-making processes both within their households and communities (Findsen, 2022; Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2019). Empowered women are more likely to invest in their children’s education, improve their family’s health, and pursue income-generating opportunities, all of which contribute to long-term poverty reduction (Nwafor & Agi, 2013; Sen, 2015). Research demonstrates that empowerment through education is linked to increased self-esteem and resilience, enabling women to navigate and challenge the structural inequalities that contribute to poverty (UNESCO, 2019; Ezimah, 2014).

Moreover, empowerment theory in the context of adult literacy is closely tied to economic empowerment. As women acquire literacy skills, they become more capable of participating in entrepreneurial activities, accessing microfinance opportunities, and even managing small businesses, thus securing a steady income stream (Hinzen, 2018; Chieke et al., 2017). Economic empowerment, in turn, supports the broader goals of empowerment theory by enabling women to contribute to their communities, reduce dependency, and become active participants in local economies (UNESCO, 2019).

Empowerment Theory also aligns with gender-focused interventions, which emphasize addressing systemic barriers that disproportionately affect women. In regions like Port-harcourt, where traditional gender roles often restrict women’s educational and economic opportunities, empowerment-based literacy programs can be transformative. By equipping women with practical skills, these programs foster a sense of agency, allowing them to question gender norms and advocate for their rights (Olojede & Dairo, 2017; Sen, 2015). Overall, Empowerment Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how literacy can serve as a tool for both individual and collective advancement, especially among women in poverty-stricken areas.

**2.2.2 Social Capital Theory**

Social Capital Theory, introduced by Bourdieu (1986) and later expanded by Putnam (1995), focuses on the resources that individuals and communities can access through social networks and relationships. Social capital is understood as the collective value derived from social connections, mutual trust, and norms of reciprocity. This theory is relevant to adult literacy programs, as literacy facilitates social connections, enhances communication skills, and promotes active community engagement (Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital can be categorized into three main types: bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding capital strengthens relationships within homogeneous groups, such as women participating in the same literacy program. Bridging capital connects individuals from different social groups, while linking capital involves relationships with institutions or individuals in positions of power. Adult literacy programs often enhance bonding and bridging social capital by creating spaces where women from different backgrounds come together, share experiences, and form supportive networks (Ezimah, 2014; Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2019).

Research indicates that literacy programs which foster social capital contribute significantly to poverty alleviation, as they help individuals establish trust-based relationships and expand their support networks (World Bank, 2018; Findsen, 2022). For women in Port-harcourt, who often face gender-based barriers, these networks offer not only emotional support but also practical assistance, such as childcare sharing, information on job opportunities, and access to resources for small businesses (Nwafor & Agi, 2013; UNESCO, 2019). Social capital enables participants to leverage collective resources, thus enhancing resilience and providing pathways out of poverty.

Social Capital Theory also highlights how literacy programs enable participants to navigate bureaucratic systems more effectively. Literacy equips individuals with the knowledge needed to understand legal documents, engage with local authorities, and apply for social services, all of which contribute to improved socioeconomic outcomes (Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986). Additionally, literacy fosters a sense of civic engagement, motivating participants to take part in community initiatives and advocate for policy changes that address social inequalities (Hinzen, 2018; Oyebamiji, 2019).

In the context of Port-harcourt, social capital developed through literacy programs can have a multiplier effect, as empowered women are more likely to educate their children and engage in community development activities. This, in turn, strengthens the social fabric of communities and builds collective capacity for addressing local challenges (Ezimah, 2014; Chieke et al., 2017). By facilitating social inclusion, literacy programs help reduce isolation and create a supportive environment where women can pursue both individual and communal goals.

Thus, Social Capital Theory underscores the importance of community connections in achieving poverty alleviation. Adult literacy programs are not only a means of education but also a foundation for building networks of mutual support, enabling women in Port-harcourt to overcome barriers related to poverty, gender, and social exclusion (Olojede & Dairo, 2017; UNESCO, 2019). This framework thus complements Empowerment Theory by emphasizing the role of social resources in fostering sustainable change.

## 2.3 Empirical Review

This empirical review provides a comprehensive analysis of studies focused on adult literacy programs and poverty alleviation, specifically emphasizing their effectiveness for women and case studies illustrating poverty reduction outcomes through literacy interventions.

**2.3.1 Effectiveness of Adult Literacy Programs for Women**

Akinwale and Atanda (2018) conducted a study on the role of adult literacy in empowering rural women in Nigeria. The study aimed to assess how literacy programs contribute to economic self-reliance among women. Using a survey methodology, findings showed that participants reported increased self-confidence, economic independence, and social integration. The study recommended expanding literacy programs to include more practical skills training.

Cheng et al. (2019) analyzed the effectiveness of a community-based literacy program targeting women in rural China. This mixed-method study found that literacy education significantly improved women's ability to participate in household financial decisions. The study recommended integrating digital literacy to further support these outcomes.

Adewale and Olaniyi (2020) examined literacy programs for women in West Africa, with a focus on income generation. The study used a longitudinal design and found that participants showed increased entrepreneurship and financial independence. The study recommended government funding for community-based programs.

Findsen (2022) conducted a study on the role of adult literacy in reducing gender inequalities in sub-Saharan Africa. Using a qualitative approach, the study revealed that literacy programs for women reduced dependency on male family members and fostered participation in community decisions. It recommended incorporating health and legal literacy components.

Olojede and Dairo (2017) evaluated adult literacy initiatives in Nigeria aimed at economically disadvantaged women. Findings showed that literacy skills led to improved knowledge of family health and childcare practices. The study recommended an expansion of such programs in other low-income communities.

Johnson (2019) explored the social benefits of literacy programs for women in Malawi. This case study approach showed that literacy empowered women to participate in civic activities, thereby contributing to local governance. The study highlighted the need for culturally adapted literacy materials.

World Bank (2018) conducted a large-scale evaluation of adult education programs across Africa. This survey-based study found that literacy skills led to better employment outcomes for women, particularly in urban areas. The study recommended partnerships between literacy programs and job training centers.

Ezimah (2014) studied the impact of functional literacy programs on Nigerian women’s economic status. The study employed a mixed-method approach and found that women who completed literacy courses had higher income levels and improved family welfare. Recommendations included expanding the scope of programs to include digital skills.

Oyebamiji and Adekola (2019) examined how adult literacy affects women's self-sufficiency in Nigeria. The study found that participants were more likely to start small businesses post-literacy training, suggesting a positive correlation between literacy and entrepreneurship. The study recommended ongoing support to ensure business sustainability.

Findsen et al. (2019) investigated the broader impact of literacy programs in African communities, focusing on women. Findings indicated that adult literacy fosters community solidarity and social cohesion. The study recommended integrating financial literacy to enhance economic impacts.

**2.3.2 Case Studies of Poverty Alleviation through Literacy**

Hinzen (2018) conducted a case study in Tanzania on poverty alleviation through functional literacy programs. Findings demonstrated that women participants saw improvements in income and savings. The study recommended partnerships with local banks for financial literacy modules.

Adekola and Adigun (2020) examined literacy programs targeting impoverished women in Ghana. Using a quantitative approach, results showed that literacy facilitated access to microfinance, which helped women launch small enterprises. The study suggested that integrating mentorship programs would improve outcomes.

UNESCO (2019) evaluated global literacy initiatives and their effect on poverty, focusing on rural women. Findings showed that literacy not only improved income but also family health and education standards. Recommendations included government incentives to increase women’s literacy participation.

Freire (1973) conducted a longitudinal study on poverty reduction through literacy in Latin America, which found that literacy increased critical awareness, enabling participants to advocate for their rights. The study emphasized the importance of including social activism elements in literacy programs.

Sen (2015) conducted an international study on literacy and development. Findings showed that poverty rates were significantly lower in regions with high female literacy. The study recommended policy reforms to ensure equal access to education for women.

Agi and Nwafor (2013) studied Nigerian women’s participation in literacy programs. This empirical study found that women who gained literacy skills contributed more effectively to household incomes. Recommendations included establishing more local literacy centers to reduce barriers to participation.

Putnam (1995) evaluated literacy programs in the U.S. and their potential for reducing poverty among marginalized groups. The study found that literacy skills facilitated employment, which in turn helped alleviate poverty. The study recommended integrating community support systems into program design.

Chieke et al. (2017) explored how literacy programs in Nigeria alleviate poverty. The study found that functional literacy positively impacted women’s self-employment and income levels. The study recommended partnerships with non-profits for additional resources.

World Bank (2018) examined adult literacy’s role in income generation across different African countries. The study found a significant reduction in poverty levels among participants, suggesting that literacy increases job opportunities. It recommended policies supporting adult education as part of national poverty alleviation strategies.

Akinwale and Atanda (2018) focused on functional literacy in low-income communities in Nigeria. The study found that literacy led to improved family health and economic security. It recommended government subsidies for low-income women enrolling in literacy programs.

## 2.4 Gaps in Literature

While considerable research has been conducted on adult literacy programs and their effectiveness in alleviating poverty, several gaps remain in the literature. First, many studies primarily focus on the quantitative outcomes of literacy programs, such as employment rates and income increases, but often neglect qualitative aspects, including participants' personal experiences and changes in self-perception or agency (Adewale & Olaniyi, 2020; Olojede & Dairo, 2017). Understanding these qualitative outcomes could provide a more comprehensive view of the impacts of literacy on women's lives.

Additionally, while some studies address the role of gender in literacy programs, there is a lack of intersectional analysis that considers how factors such as ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status intersect with gender to affect literacy outcomes (Ezimah, 2014; Findsen et al., 2019). This oversight may lead to a one-dimensional understanding of the challenges faced by diverse groups of women and limit the effectiveness of program design.

Moreover, most existing research tends to focus on specific geographic locations, with limited comparative studies across different regions (Chieke et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2019). This narrow focus restricts the generalizability of findings and fails to consider how cultural and socio-economic contexts influence the effectiveness of literacy programs. A broader geographical scope in research could provide valuable insights into best practices that can be adapted across different settings.

Another significant gap lies in the sustainability of adult literacy programs. Many studies evaluate immediate outcomes but overlook the long-term impacts of these programs on poverty alleviation (World Bank, 2018). Understanding whether the skills acquired through literacy training lead to lasting changes in participants' economic status is crucial for justifying investments in such programs.

Lastly, there is limited research on the integration of technology in adult literacy programs and its impact on women's empowerment (Findsen, 2022; Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2019). As technology increasingly shapes education, exploring how digital literacy can be incorporated into traditional programs could offer new avenues for empowering women in rural and urban settings alike.

Addressing these gaps will enhance our understanding of adult literacy's role in poverty alleviation among women and inform the development of more effective, inclusive, and sustainable literacy programs.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts the descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey approach allows the researcher to gather detailed data directly from participants, thus facilitating a robust analysis of variables related to literacy program impact, participation challenges, and economic outcomes for the women involved (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2019). This design is chosen because it enables the investigation of existing conditions and associations within a defined population without manipulating any variables (Babbie, 2020).

## 3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all women enrolled in adult literacy programs across Port-harcourt. This includes women from diverse backgrounds, ages, and socioeconomic statuses, reflecting the broad demographic scope of participants in such initiatives (Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2019). The population consists of 550 women from eight (8) registered women organizations who had benefited from adult literacy programme in Port-harcourt Metropolis

## 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

For this study, a sample size of 150 participants was selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is effective here, as it focuses on women actively involved in literacy programs, thereby enhancing the study's relevance to its goals (Patton, 2015). The sample size determination aligns with the Krejcie and Morgan table for population sampling, ensuring statistical adequacy (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). This sampling technique allows for targeted insights into the experiences of women participants, thereby producing meaningful data specific to the population of interest (Etikan et al., 2016).

## 3.4 Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with both closed-ended and Likert scale questions to assess participants' perceptions of literacy program effectiveness, barriers to participation, and any noticeable economic benefits (McLeod, 2018). This instrument is selected due to its efficiency in gathering quantitative data from a large sample, allowing for subsequent statistical analysis (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The questionnaire includes sections on demographic data, program participation, literacy levels, and perceived outcomes, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the study’s objectives (Oyebamiji, 2019).

## 3.5 Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire's validity was established through expert review. Two education professionals with experience in adult literacy programs reviewed the instrument, ensuring content relevance and alignment with the study’s objectives.

## 3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through a pilot test involving 20 respondents from a similar literacy program, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.78, indicating good internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). These steps ensured that the instrument provided reliable measurements of the study variables.

## 3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over four weeks at various literacy centers in Port-harcourt. Two research assistants helped in the dissemination of the questionnaire and retrieval of the instrument. In line with ethical research practices, participants were briefed on the study's purpose and provided with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to reduce the likelihood of loss or participant bias. The data collection process was designed to maximize response rates while ensuring data integrity (Babbie, 2020; Creswell, 2014).

## 3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from questionnaire copies were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize demographic data, and inferential statistics, such as t-tests, were utilized to evaluate research hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. This analytical approach is appropriate for detecting patterns and correlations between variables. It enables the study to draw evidence-based conclusions on the effectiveness of adult literacy programs in reducing poverty among women in Port-harcourt.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from 150 participants through a structured questionnaire. The analysis is structured around the demographic profile of respondents and the research questions. Data is presented in tables, showing frequencies, percentages, and mean values, accompanied by interpretations.

## 4.2 Analysis of Demographic Information

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, marital status, educational background, employment status, and monthly income. Tables summarize the data, providing insight into the sample population's characteristics.

#### ****Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents****

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age Group** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| 18–25 | 20 | 13.3% |
| 26–35 | 50 | 33.3% |
| 36–45 | 40 | 26.7% |
| 46–55 | 25 | 16.7% |
| 56 and above | 15 | 10% |
| **Total** | **150** | **100%** |

The majority of respondents (33.3%) are between 26 and 35 years, followed by those between 36 and 45 years (26.7%). The distribution suggests that most participants are within the economically active age group.

#### ****Table 2: Educational Background of Respondents****

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Educational Level** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| No Formal Education | 30 | 20% |
| Primary School Certificate | 40 | 26.7% |
| Secondary School Certificate | 50 | 33.3% |
| Tertiary Education | 30 | 20% |
| **Total** | **150** | **100%** |

A significant proportion of participants (33.3%) have secondary education, with 20% having no formal education. This distribution highlights the educational levels targeted by adult literacy programs.

## 4.3 Analysis of Research Questions

The responses to each research question are presented and analyzed below.

#### ****Research Question 1:** What is the impact of adult literacy programs on poverty alleviation among women in Port-Harcourt?**

##### ****Table 3: Impact of Adult Literacy Programs on Poverty Alleviation****

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **SA** | **A** | **N** | **D** | **SD** | **Mean** |
| Improved ability to read and write | 60 (40%) | 50 (33.3%) | 20 (13.3%) | 10 (6.7%) | 10 (6.7%) | 4.00 |
| Enhanced employment or income opportunities | 50 (33.3%) | 60 (40%) | 15 (10%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.83 |
| Improved family standard of living | 55 (36.7%) | 50 (33.3%) | 20 (13.3%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.83 |
| Better management of personal finances | 45 (30%) | 60 (40%) | 25 (16.7%) | 10 (6.7%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.80 |
| Increased community participation | 50 (33.3%) | 55 (36.7%) | 20 (13.3%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.80 |

Participants largely agree that adult literacy programs positively impact their lives, particularly in reading/writing skills (Mean = 4.00), employment opportunities, and financial management (Mean = 3.83 each). These results support the role of literacy programs in improving economic self-sufficiency and quality of life.

#### ****Research Question 2:** What challenges affect the implementation and effectiveness of adult literacy programs in Port-Harcourt?**

##### ****Table 4: Challenges in Implementing and Participating in Adult Literacy Programs****

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **SA** | **A** | **N** | **D** | **SD** | **Mean** |
| Accessibility issues due to location | 60 (40%) | 50 (33.3%) | 20 (13.3%) | 15 (10%) | 5 (3.3%) | 3.97 |
| Lack of time due to family responsibilities | 55 (36.7%) | 55 (36.7%) | 15 (10%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.87 |
| Financial constraints limit participation | 65 (43.3%) | 45 (30%) | 15 (10%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.93 |
| Cultural/family objections | 40 (26.7%) | 50 (33.3%) | 30 (20%) | 20 (13.3%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.60 |
| Program content does not fully meet needs | 50 (33.3%) | 45 (30%) | 20 (13.3%) | 20 (13.3%) | 15 (10%) | 3.63 |

The most significant challenges are accessibility (Mean = 3.97) and financial constraints (Mean = 3.93). Family responsibilities and cultural factors also impact participation, highlighting areas where literacy programs could enhance support mechanisms for women.

#### ****Research Question 3:** What strategies can improve the relevance and reach of literacy programs in Port-Harcourt?**

##### ****Table 5: Suggested Strategies for Improving Adult Literacy Programs****

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **SA** | **A** | **N** | **D** | **SD** | **Mean** |
| Increase local centers to improve access | 70 (46.7%) | 50 (33.3%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 5 (3.3%) | 4.13 |
| Introduce flexible schedules (e.g., evening classes) | 65 (43.3%) | 55 (36.7%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 5 (3.3%) | 4.10 |
| Provide financial assistance or subsidies | 75 (50%) | 50 (33.3%) | 10 (6.7%) | 10 (6.7%) | 5 (3.3%) | 4.17 |
| Customize content to include vocational skills | 60 (40%) | 55 (36.7%) | 15 (10%) | 10 (6.7%) | 10 (6.7%) | 3.97 |
| Increase awareness about the benefits of programs | 70 (46.7%) | 50 (33.3%) | 10 (6.7%) | 15 (10%) | 5 (3.3%) | 4.10 |

Participants strongly support strategies to improve program accessibility and relevance. Financial support (Mean = 4.17) and local centers (Mean = 4.13) are seen as vital improvements. Vocational training and flexible schedules are also seen as effective strategies for increasing participation.

## 4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the data analysis in this study reveal the significant role of adult literacy programs in alleviating poverty among women in Port-Harcourt, as well as the challenges these programs face and strategies that could enhance their impact. These insights provide an in-depth understanding of the social and economic value of adult literacy in the community and highlight areas for potential improvement.

**Impact of Adult Literacy Programs on Poverty Alleviation**
The analysis of responses to Research Question 1 reveals that adult literacy programs positively impact women in several important ways. A high percentage of respondents agreed that participation in literacy programs has improved their literacy skills, empowered them with better employment opportunities, and enhanced their ability to manage personal finances. These benefits directly contribute to poverty alleviation by equipping women with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in economic activities, which aligns with findings from similar studies showing that adult literacy can foster financial independence and uplift family standards of living. The responses indicate that literacy programs do more than teach reading and writing—they also offer a pathway to greater economic empowerment and community engagement. This effect is crucial, as it reinforces the argument that education, even in adulthood, can serve as a catalyst for poverty reduction.

**Challenges in Implementing and Participating in Adult Literacy Programs**
In addressing Research Question 2, the data show several prominent challenges that hinder the full implementation and effectiveness of adult literacy programs. Accessibility emerged as a critical issue, with many participants identifying location constraints as a barrier to attending these programs. The geographical spread of literacy centers in Port-Harcourt may limit some women's access, particularly for those in remote or underserved areas. Additionally, financial constraints and time limitations due to family responsibilities were highlighted as key obstacles. These findings align with existing literature, which suggests that adult women, especially those with familial responsibilities, face unique challenges when accessing educational opportunities. Cultural and family expectations also played a role, with some participants citing family objections as a factor limiting their participation. These findings suggest that beyond logistical issues, socio-cultural dynamics must be addressed to enhance program inclusivity and reach.

**Strategies to Improve the Relevance and Reach of Literacy Programs**
The responses to Research Question 3 provide valuable recommendations for making adult literacy programs more accessible and relevant to participants. Financial assistance was identified as a highly effective measure that could encourage greater participation by alleviating the cost-related burdens of enrollment and attendance. Similarly, establishing more local centers was suggested as a way to enhance accessibility, especially for women residing in distant areas. The participants also strongly supported flexible schedules, such as evening classes, which would help accommodate women who manage household or employment responsibilities during the day. Moreover, customizing the content of literacy programs to include practical and vocational skills was considered essential for increasing the programs' relevance. By integrating skills directly applicable to income-generating activities, such as tailoring, craft making, or financial literacy, these programs could have a greater impact on poverty alleviation.

The high level of agreement on these strategies underscores the importance of program design that aligns with the daily realities of adult learners. These findings support the notion that adult education should be adaptive and responsive to learners' specific needs and life circumstances. Moreover, promoting greater awareness of the benefits of adult literacy programs was highlighted as a means to encourage broader participation and shift community perceptions toward valuing adult education for women.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

## 5.1 Summary

This study investigated the role of adult literacy programs in alleviating poverty among women in Port-Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State. Specifically, it examined the impact of these programs on women’s socio-economic status, identified challenges in the implementation and participation of these programs, and explored strategies for enhancing their effectiveness and reach. Utilizing a sample of 150 participants, data was gathered through structured questionnaires, and analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The analysis revealed that adult literacy programs have a significant positive impact on women’s lives. Participants noted improvements in literacy skills, which enhanced their employability and income-generating capabilities. This, in turn, contributed to better personal financial management and a general improvement in the quality of life for themselves and their families. The study found that adult literacy programs provided participants with the tools needed to pursue economic self-sufficiency, reduce dependency, and improve their social and economic standing.

However, several challenges affect the successful implementation and participation in adult literacy programs. Accessibility issues, primarily due to the limited availability of local centers, were a significant barrier. Many participants also cited financial constraints and time limitations due to family responsibilities as obstacles that hinder their ability to engage in the programs. Cultural and family attitudes towards women’s education emerged as additional challenges, limiting some women’s opportunities to benefit fully from these programs. These challenges underscored the need for enhanced support systems and flexible program structures tailored to the unique circumstances of adult female learners.

In addressing these challenges, the study identified several strategies to improve the relevance and reach of adult literacy programs. Recommendations included the provision of financial assistance to reduce enrollment costs, the establishment of more local centers to improve accessibility, and the introduction of flexible scheduling options to accommodate participants with family and work responsibilities. Furthermore, customizing program content to include vocational skills, such as trade and financial literacy, was identified as a strategy to enhance the programs’ relevance, making them more practical for immediate economic benefit. The study’s findings align with broader research that advocates for adaptive, responsive, and inclusive adult literacy programs as a means of sustainable poverty alleviation.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The findings from this study underscore the critical role of adult literacy programs in supporting poverty alleviation among women in Port-Harcourt. These programs have a profound impact on participants’ socio-economic status by enhancing their literacy, employability, and capacity for financial self-sufficiency. Adult literacy serves as a transformative tool, empowering women to participate more actively in economic activities, improve their income levels, and contribute meaningfully to their households and communities.

In particular, the study found that women who participate in adult literacy programs experience a range of benefits. They gain essential literacy and numeracy skills that improve their employability, enabling them to access better economic opportunities. This is especially relevant in today’s socio-economic environment, where basic literacy is a prerequisite for most jobs and entrepreneurial activities. By acquiring these skills, participants reported being better able to manage personal finances, plan family expenses, and even take advantage of opportunities for further education or vocational training. These improvements collectively contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty, reinforcing the value of literacy as a foundation for economic advancement.

Despite these benefits, the study highlights significant challenges to the successful implementation of adult literacy programs in Port-Harcourt. Accessibility issues limit the reach of these programs, especially for women in remote or underserved areas. The lack of nearby literacy centers poses a logistical challenge, reducing program enrollment and limiting the number of women who can benefit. Financial constraints further impede participation, as some women cannot afford transportation costs or other incidental expenses associated with attending literacy programs. Time limitations due to family responsibilities, coupled with socio-cultural expectations, also affect women’s ability to engage in literacy education fully. These factors reveal the need for a more supportive infrastructure and program structure that addresses the specific barriers faced by women.

To enhance the effectiveness of adult literacy programs, the study suggests a multi-faceted approach that includes increasing program accessibility, reducing financial barriers, and offering flexible scheduling options. Expanding the reach of literacy programs through more localized centers and introducing financial assistance or subsidies would significantly increase program participation. In addition, flexible class schedules that consider the unique needs of women balancing household and work responsibilities would allow more participants to engage with the program. Finally, incorporating practical skills and vocational training within literacy programs can increase their relevance to participants’ lives, enabling women to apply their learning to income-generating activities immediately.

In conclusion, adult literacy programs are essential tools for poverty alleviation among women in Port-Harcourt, but their full potential can only be realized if they are adapted to meet participants' socio-economic realities. By implementing supportive measures to address accessibility, financial barriers, and socio-cultural constraints, literacy programs can have an even more significant impact, contributing to sustainable poverty reduction and economic empowerment for women in the community. The insights from this study contribute to the understanding of adult education's role in poverty alleviation and support the call for policies that prioritize inclusive and responsive adult literacy initiatives.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study’s findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of adult literacy programs in alleviating poverty among women in Port-Harcourt:

**Establish More Localized Literacy Centers**

Increasing the number of literacy centers within close proximity to target communities can improve accessibility and encourage greater participation. This expansion would help women in remote or underserved areas to attend literacy programs without the burden of long-distance travel.

**Provide Financial Assistance and Subsidies**

Offering financial aid, such as subsidies or free materials, would reduce the financial barriers associated with program attendance. This could include subsidized transportation, free course materials, or even stipends for participants, particularly those from low-income backgrounds.

**Implement Flexible Scheduling Options**

Introducing flexible schedules, such as evening or weekend classes, can accommodate women with family and work responsibilities. This approach would allow more women to participate without sacrificing their other commitments, thereby expanding the program's reach.

**Incorporate Vocational and Practical Skills into the Curriculum**

Including practical and vocational training within literacy programs, such as financial literacy, basic business skills, or trade skills, would increase the program’s relevance. Participants would gain skills that can be immediately applied to income-generating activities, enhancing both program impact and participants' economic empowerment.

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**Questionnaire on Adult Literacy Programmes for Poverty Alleviation Among Women in Port-Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State**

**Section A: Demographic Information**

Age

☐ 18–25

☐ 26–35

☐ 36–45

☐ 46–55

☐ 56 and above

**Marital Status**

☐ Single

☐ Married

☐ Divorced

☐ Widowed

**Educational Background**

☐ No Formal Education

☐ Primary School Certificate

☐ Secondary School Certificate

☐ Tertiary Education

**Employment Status**

☐ Unemployed

☐ Self-Employed

☐ Employed (Part-time)

☐ Employed (Full-time)

**Monthly Income (in Naira)**

☐ Less than ₦20,000

☐ ₦20,000–₦40,000

☐ ₦41,000–₦60,000

☐ Above ₦60,000

**Section B: Impact of Adult Literacy Programs on Poverty Alleviation**

(Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Adult literacy programs have improved my ability to read and write.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

My participation in literacy programs has enhanced my employment or income-generating opportunities.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

The skills I learned through adult literacy programs have improved my family's standard of living.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Adult literacy programs have helped me to better manage my personal finances.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Adult literacy programs have enabled me to participate more actively in community activities.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

**Section C: Challenges in the Implementation and Effectiveness of Adult Literacy Programs**

I face difficulties in accessing adult literacy programs due to location constraints.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Lack of time (e.g., due to family responsibilities) limits my participation in adult literacy programs.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Financial constraints hinder my ability to enroll in adult literacy programs.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Cultural beliefs or family objections have limited my participation in these programs.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

The literacy program content does not fully meet my personal or professional needs.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

**Section D: Strategies to Improve the Relevance and Reach of Literacy Programs**

More local centers are needed to improve access to adult literacy programs.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Introducing flexible program schedules (e.g., evening classes) would enhance participation.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Offering financial assistance or subsidies would make adult literacy programs more accessible.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Customizing program content to include vocational and practical skills would increase program relevance.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Raising awareness about the benefits of adult literacy programs would encourage more women to participate.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

**Section E: Additional Comments**

Please share any additional suggestions or feedback on how adult literacy programs in Port-Harcourt can be improved to better serve women and contribute to poverty alleviation.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will contribute to the improvement of adult literacy programs in Port-Harcourt and assist in efforts toward poverty alleviation.