

INFLUENCE OF POVERTY ON THE PARTICIPATION OF LEARNERS IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This paper discusses poverty as it affects adult learners' performance in adult literacy programme, through hampering their commitment as learners, thereby making them graduate as half-bakes. The paper was broken down into sections as; meaning of poverty, types of poverty, causes of poverty, poverty index in Niger state, poverty among adult learners' in Niger state, why many adult learners are poor in Niger state, effects of poverty on adult learners in Niger state. The paper established the fact that poverty inhibit adult learner's academic achievements, using qualitative analytical approach the paper concludes that abject poverty negates learners' commitment to learning programme in Niger state. Therefore, the paper recommended among others that there should be provision of employment to adult learners', addressing banditry menace as well as introduction and implementation of literacy loan should be provided.

Keywords: Poverty, Influence, adult learners, Adult Education.

DOI: <https://doie.org/10.50390/NCAEJ.2026405020>

Introduction

Adult education serves as a vital tool for personal and societal development, providing individuals with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for improving quality of life, and enhances active participation in the socio-economic sphere. In Niger State, Nigeria, adult education programmes are designed to combat illiteracy and promote lifelong learning among citizens. However, participation in these programmes remain discouraging due to number of factors, that poverty lead.

Conceptualization

A concise and globally acceptable definition of poverty is elusive, due to the facts, that it affects many aspects of human condition or due to the conceptual issues involved in determining its nature. These issues centred around who is poor? What makes him poor? And how is poverty gauged? (Ismaila, 2005).

The above reasons had prompted the evolution of different definitions of the word “Poverty”. Egwemni, (2013) in the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP) defines poverty as a state of long-term deprivation of those essential or basic and non-material attributes which are considered necessary for decent living in human life. Poverty can also be defined as a condition that results in inability to achieve a certain minimal standard of living (Mutiullah, 2016). The view of social scientists and economists, in conceptualizing the phenomenon of poverty, has it that, poverty can be conceptualized in four ways; these ways; are lack of access to basic needs; as a result of impaired access to productive resources; outcome of inefficient use of common resources; and result of “exclusive mechanism” (Adefabi, 2014).

However, one may not be wrong, if he defines poverty as lack of basic necessity of life that makes life comfortable and satisfactory. The basic necessity to life for human being are as follows: foods, cloths, shelter, medication, good medication, access to good educational system, fuel and transport etc. (Ismaila, 2005).

Poverty can be conceptualized as a phenomenon that exists at the national, community, household and individual levels. At the national level, poverty portends a state of general socio-economic underdevelopment, emanating from absence or poor natural resources/endowment, poor human resources endowment, low productivity, low and lack of developing national income or gross domestic product, inadequate availability of social facilities and social amenities and services and a general inability to provide a minimally decent level of living for the common citizen. Poverty as a global menace, is divided into three (3) namely.

1. Absolute
2. Relative
3. Subjective

1. **Absolute Poverty:** This type of poverty is seen as the inability of the individual to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of basic physical and conditional needs. Ismail (2005) in Harambus, (1980) isolated basic physical needs to include nutrition, shelter, and health, while the basic conditional needs he identifies as, education, security, leisure and recreation.
2. **Relative Poverty:** This type of poverty, centred around having an income below fifty percent or sixty percent of the median household income of the population the conventions of the day. This definition suggests that; there are no standard of living common to all people in all societies. However, poverty condition differs from one society or community to the other.
3. **Subjective Poverty:** This refers to the feeling of individuals or groups on whether or not they consider themselves poor. In effect, this type of poverty, has it that the state of being poor lies on the individual’s or group’s perception on whether they are poor or not poor.

Causes of Poverty among Adult Learners

Many reasons are associated or are seen to be the major causes of poverty in Nigeria state. Part of these reasons are:

- i. Unemployment and under employment

- ii. Ill-Health/Diseases
- iii. Bad Governance
- iv. Crime and violence/Banditry
- v. Low economic growth performance

1. **Unemployment:** Unemployment is a very determinant of poverty. Gainful employment is important for an individual to earn income and escape from poverty. Many unemployment issues are mostly product or result of Low Level of educational qualifications or lack of skills which is mostly common among the rural and urban people. Many of the adult learners in Niger State are affected by issues of unemployment, which throw them to the vicious circle of poverty. On many occasions, the vicious circle of poverty prompts them to emphatically opt out from the system due to pressure or family burden and what not.
2. **Ill-Health/Disease:** One of the fundamental lifelines to human industriousness, brevity and all forms of activities is health. A good health is basic to human's welfare and one of the fundamental objectives of social and economic development. Poor health shackles human capital, reduces return to learning and impedes entrepreneurial capacities and holds back or stagnate individual's economic development (Adefabi, (2014). Therefore, individuals suffering from diseases are used to be perpetually poor, due to regular use of the resources at their disposal for seeking of medication. In most countries of the world, People with chronic diseases such as malaria, typhoid, HIV/AIDS, diabetes find it challenging to endure the cost of medications for their treatment. Many of the victims due succumb to diseases and die due to lack of funds to sponsor their medication. In Nigeria for instance, AIDS prevalence is about 6.7 with an infected adult population. This is a big deal that can constrain availability and participation of this segment of the population in the labour market to earn income.
3. **Bad Governance:** The persistence and pervasiveness of poverty in several part of Nigeria, has been linked to the lack of popular participation in governance, decision making which in turns creates lee way for corruption, kleptomania, poor accountability in governance, transparency in resources allocation, weak programme implementation and monitoring. Invariably, development programmes are rendered ineffective and poverty reduction initiatives are therefore ineffective and resources wasted or squander.
4. **Crime and Violence Banditry:** This is absolutely incontrovertible, that no society or individual thrives in a state of violence. A steady increase in crime and violence has degraded the quality of life to a varying extent in many countries of the world and society. Although, individuals of all socioeconomic groups are affected, the ruralites and the urbanites are particularly vulnerable to the social problems. For instance, banditry issue in Niger state is tumultuous. Many lives have been lost; many properties have also been lost. In Niger State. As asserted by Eneji & Ocheja, (2023) Banditry has significantly increased poverty levels in many Nigerian States, particularly in Niger, Zamfara and Katsina. The persistent attacks by armed groups have displaced thousands of rural drenchers forcing them to abandon their farmlands and livestock that are their primary sources of livelihood. Moreover, the persistent insecurity in the north-west region and north central has caused a severe reduction in crop and livestock production, thereby deepening rural poverty (FAO, 2022). Potentials adults across the 25 local government areas of the state, either as individual or co-operative societies, plant crops like yam, rice, maize, millet, soya beans and sugarcane, while others engage in animal husbandry and fishing. In fact, Niger state is described as the food basket of the nation due to this yearly massive food production

- during both the wet season and dry season. The state has the largest land mass in the 76,363km² and the government as well as the people are not taking it for granted as they engage in massive food production. Despite all these assets, Niger state is presently facing security issue which is hampering the continuous participation of the people in their farming activities thereby adding to poverty. (Vanguard, 2023).
5. **Migration:** Migration rates do result to poverty especially when the majority of the individuals who migrate are skilled workers. On the other hand, individual who emigrate vacate jobs in labour markets. Thus, migration drains skills. It reduces the pace of economic growth and slows the process of overtly job creation. Migration it has been discerned that, migration has become a major factor in testifying poverty rate in Niger State. The inhumane activities of rural bandits, has forced many rural residents to migrate to urban centres such as Minna, Bida, Kagara in search of safety and livelihood opportunities. However, most of the migrants lacks employable skills and adequate resources resulting in low income and poor condition of living (Adewale, 2022). This movement is indisputably affecting agriculture and adding to poverty among potential adult learners in rural settings.
 6. **Low level of education:** The high the level of education of an individual, the more the chances of been privileged to lucrative and productive job opportunities of high pay. Likewise, the more the education level is low, the more the chance to good jobs of high pay is poor. Educational level determines access to employment, low level of education or the lack of education, limits the ability to seek well paid jobs. Earn wages that cannot meet their family and personal minimum needs Egweri, (2013) in Afonja and fidelis, (2003).
 7. **Certain cultural and religious practices:** There are certain conventions and religious practices that are inimical to development and prone to cause poverty. These types are the ones that moderate or limit women's role in most part of the country and as well as their access to land and other form of productive resources. Unsuitable traditional beliefs and practices as well as cultural rigidities have obviously contributed to poverty by keeping agricultural production low and impeding individual's talent (Egwemi 2013 in Afonja and fidelis). This situation is mostly common in society, where Purdah is enforced. In this clime, the feminine gender uses to be at the receiving end. This is one of the reasons, poverty in the North among the women folk is very high.

Poverty Index in Niger State

It is uncontradictory fact, that poverty is a global phenomenon and pervading all aspects of the world. Despite being the hub in the context of production of different farm produce for feeding the nation, due to its size, fertile and arable mass land, the socio – economic situation in Niger state, remain alarming and pitifully naïve and marked by ugly features. This is owing to the fact that most citizens of Niger state live below the poverty line, making them susceptible to hunger, diseases and destitution. Poverty in the faces of the citizens is evident and deeply rooted. In many communities, roads are full of potholes and erosion has eaten deeply into the land. Public institutions have decay, and hospitals suffer from acute shortage of essential drugs. There is wide spread of unemployment proliferation of tertian institution without adequate funding's, a persistent rise in the number of out of school children and alarming increase in hunger and poverty.

Consequently, the recent reaction of many citizens during palliatives distribution, in different parts of Niger state, where old and young men and women scrambled over expired rice,

spaghetti, beans among other crops that were given as palliatives to the citizens by His Excellency, Umar Bago, of Niger State, established the awry states of poverty in play. The residents of Chanchaga and Bosso Local Areas, of the state, had even expressed displeasure over delay in giving out the palliatives (Tribune, 2023). It has been established beyond reasonable doubt, the phenomenon of poverty manifests in absolute and relative terms. Observations had it that, those who live below one dollar per day is put at between 54% and 70% in Niger State with over 6,783,300 population which is dreadful and shocking. Niger state that is believed to be one of the lands with a lot of potentials is today having their people living in irony of comfortability due to banditry threat. The situation is made worse by the fuel subsidy removal which resulted in the provocation of hike in the cost of commodities. Local and state government workers, retirees are also not given their dues. Moreover, portable water is also lackey in the state on the other hand, there are many unfunctional boreholes in many locations. Even Minna, the capital city of the state, suffers the brunt of yet governance failure as the people receive promises from desperate politicians that they will provide them with water, lies upon deceits! Today, common staple foods are now very expensive and many people have devised different formular to survive daily, weekly or monthly.

Poverty Among Adult Learners in Niger State

Adult learners are those learners who missed the chance and privilege or who are educationally “disfranchised” or educationally “Left out”. Many reasons could result to the disfranchisement among which could be early marriage, war, poverty, security etc. Adult learners dabble in adult education programmes in order to change for better living.

Adult education is a collective name for all forms of learning programmes in which adults participate in order to develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or professional qualifications to enable them meet their needs and those of their societies. It is also a transmission process of the general technical or vocational knowledge, as well as acquisition of skills, values and attitudes which takes place in and out of the formal education system with the view of catering for early education lapses of grown-up individuals and developing their self fulfilment and active participation in the entire aspect of life of their society (Ihejirika, 2012).

Poverty situation in Niger State is worrisome. Niger state is believed to be one of the states in Nigeria that is poor, despite its large size nature and its prominent contribution in producing large farm produce in feeding the nation yet, it struggles in socio economic sphere. For instance, in 2020, Gov. Abubakar Sani Bello, had once said, Niger state is among the states with the highest number of out of school children, because some of the parents cannot afford to send their children to school or were displaced by banditry, while some are due to Almajiri system being practised.

The said factors have led to social exclusion and chronic poverty, thus churning out young people with little or formal education and lacking employable skills (Punch, 2022). According to poverty headcount rate in Nigeria of 2024 by state; Niger state has 66.11% share of people in poverty. It was also stated that, out of the 24.21 million, 3.8 million people in Niger state, require humanitarian assistance to get out of the Yoke of poverty and its related cases (concern world, 2021). Today in Niger State, poverty rate is high due to perpetual payment of ransom to bandits, as people are afraid to go about their economic activities due to fear of unknown their forcing to be living in poverty. Disruptions of

economic activities, stoppage of farming activities among other things thereby exacerbating socio-economic problems to individuals and communities (research gate Innovative journal of education, 2023).

As noted in the above submission, poverty in Nigeria and Niger State exclusively, cut across the whole level of human beings. Moreover, there are reasons every section finds itself in an inevitable bracket of poverty. This aspect has an array of some of the reasons many adult learners are in poverty:

- i. Low level of literacy
 - ii. Absence of good policy for the adult learners
 - iii. Pervasive banditry activities and gangsterism
 - iv. Family burden
 - iv. Economic misfortunes of the time
 - v. Inflation
1. **Low Level of Literacy:** As noted above, the higher the qualification level, the higher the chance of high jobs with lucrative pay package. Vice versa, many of the adult learners are not privileged to interesting jobs opportunities with high salaries and wages, due to lack of qualifications which many organizations or employers are using as the yardstick of efficiency and productivity in place of work. Mostly, their salaries are nothing to take home about. And it cannot serve their demands.
 2. **Absence of Good Policy for The Adult Learners:** It is quiet, an unconditional fact, that Nigerian government and all state government in the country, do not have good provision or policy in place for assuaging the financial challenges of adult learners in the state and country generally. Absences of policies like free education is gauntly inflaming the poverty level of many of the adult learners in the state.
 3. **Pervasive Rural Banditry:** Banditry is an in human activities that is characterized by animal rustling, kidnapping for ransom, killing of innocent citizens, raping or sex violence, razing of farm lands and institutions, destruction of communities and villages, attacking of police stations, military check points and setting disorder. These acts one perpetuated by outlaws, through the use of sophisticated weapons, such as AK 47, AK 49, RPG, grenade, automated riffles, G3 riffles, light machine guns, bombs, anti-air craft, etc (Rufa'i, 2021). The activities of bandits in Niger State are known even by international communities. Bandits had in several occasions killed many innocent uniform men, citizens, traditional title holders and forcing villagers and farmers to pay ransom before they could be allowed to go to farm, yet they killed them after payment of ransom and drive them away. For instance, on August 14, 2023; It was reported that, dozens of farmers in villages in Wushishi and Lavun LGAs fled their homes and farms in heavy rainfall at night to escape the onslaught of bandits whom they noted moved in large numbers with cattle (Daily Trust, 2023). Farming activities in Niger State is now in limbo, despite the availability of land and fertility. This situation is occasioned by excessive banditry operation in many parts of the rural areas where large commercialized farming and subsistence farming are in play. Many of the productive farmers who are adults and relied solely on farming are mostly taking refuge in different internally displaced persons' camps or with their relatives in many local government headquarters. This situation had thrown many of the adult learners into poverty.
 4. **Farming Burden:** Most of the adult learners are family men with responsibilities and earning little as their salaries and wages. The little they have cannot satisfy their needs

and that of their family. This situation, is today throwing many adult learners in poverty.

5. **Economic Misfortunes of Time:** Nigerians are generally in economic hardship. The hardship which emanated as a result of fuel subsidy removal have affected all citizens. The event resulted in reduction in people income, weaken purchasing power, and limit access to basic needs which turns in increase poverty levels. The policy of fuel subsidy removal resulted in a situation where money in the hands of many adult learners is not sufficient enough to provide them with basic necessity of life and that of their family, thereby rendering them poor.

1. Withdrawal
2. Affects Learning Progress
3. Delay in Graduation
4. Graduating as Half-baked
5. Low Grade
6. Behavioral problem

- i. **Withdrawal:** It has been established through observation with many adult learners, that many adult learners, who had stated adult leaning literacy find it pretty difficult to complete and graduate successfully due to poverty. Most of the victims find it at the safer side to withdraw, owing to the fact, that they cannot meet the financial demand of the programme and that of their family.
- ii. **Affects learning progress:** learning program tend to accelerate among the adult learners if they are financially buoyant in satisfying the financial demand of the learning programme vice versa
- iii. **Deployment graduation:** It has been generally accepted, adult learners who are in poverty are not able to graduate with their colleagues, due to the fact, that sometimes, they missed assignments, test, and even examinations, which is resulting to carry over, thereby leading to spill over and deployment in graduation period.
- iv. **Graduate as Half-baked:** Plurality of adult learners with passion of learning or literacy finds it difficult to graduate as fully developed learners, due to lack of total commitment, that will be given them upper hands of developing as fully developed learners. The failure to be in literacy centre as required, make them to missed or misconceptualise the basic rudiments as professionals or whatsoever, there by leading them too half-baked.
- v. **Low Grade:** the lack of concentration due to wandering mind and thought of satisfying family demand compound and result to seeing low grade scores among many adult learners.
- vi. **Behavioral Problem:** Many of the adult learners, tend to be aggressive and distressful due to emotional and psychological stress which the lack of meeting the basic needs of self and family as a result of poverty is attached to.

Conclusion:

It is evident from the above, that the level of poverty among and adult learners inhibit successful achievement of adult learners in adult literacy program. This proved that among the factors that affects adult learner graduation, is poverty. Based on this study, therefore, one can draw an inference that, socio-economic status of an adult learners goes a long way in affecting and determining his literacy achievement in literacy centre. As such, this paper concludes that, Provision of employment to adult learners, Introduction and implementation of free literacy for adult learners, Free medical access to adult literacy learners, addressing

banditry issues, good governance system among other things can go along way in influencing in adult education program in Niger State, Nigeria.

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