

STRENGTHENING RURAL FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH ADULT EDUCATION IN OVIA SOUTH WEST, EDO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of adult education in fostering food security and agricultural productivity among rural communities in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State. To enable the study to achieve its objectives, five (5) research questions were raised. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population is the entire household drawn from Twelve (12) wards. The population of the area is given to be One Hundred Thirty Five Thousand Three Hundred and Fifty Six (135,356) in Ovia South West local government area of Edo State, Nigeria from which a total of two hundred (260) respondents are selected to form the sample size for the study through purposive sampling techniques. A validated instrument titled: the "Role of Adult Education in Fostering Food Security and Agricultural Productivity among Rural Communities Questionnaire (RAEFSAPRCQ)," with a reliability index of 0.85 determined through Person Product Moment Correlation Statistics. Collected data were analyzed using mean score standard, simple percentage and frequency count. Findings from the data revealed among others that the cause of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity are; inefficient agricultural practices, violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, climate change, post-harvest loss, low budgetary allocation to agriculture, unavailability of disease resistance varieties and poor seed and seedlings as well as post-harvest loss due to bad roads and poor storage system. It was also revealed that adult education through it adult literacy and extension education programmes helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in the area by providing farmers access to farm inputs, credit facilities, relaying new innovation and modern farming techniques to farmers. Finally, it was recommended that farmers should be encouraged to participate in adult education scheme through the provision of incentives such as subsidized agricultural inputs and good market for agricultural produce through the scheme.

Keywords: Adult Education, food security, Agricultural Productivity, Rural Communities

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Introduction

Agriculture is one of the mainstays of Nigeria economy (Kobani & Egumah, 2022). Economy of Nigeria is historically based on Agriculture and about 70% of the work force is still engage in farming and farm related activities and as a result, a strong and an efficient Agricultural sector would enable the country to feed its growing population, generate employment, and earn foreign exchange as well as providing raw materials for industries.

However, in recent time food crisis in Nigeria has reached unprecedented levels, with food inflation soaring and a significant increase in the number of food insecure Nigerians. This policy brief, developed by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), (2024), provides a comprehensive analysis of the current food security crisis and In January 2024, Nigeria's food inflation surged to 35.41% from 33.9% in December 2023. The number of food-insecure Nigerians increased significantly, from 66.2 million in Q1, 2023, to 100 million in Q1, 2024 (World Food Programme (WFP), (2024), with 18.6 million facing acute hunger and 43.7 million Nigerians are showing crisis-level or above crisis level hunger coping strategies as of March 2024. This unprecedented crisis demands immediate humanitarian, social protection, and food systems responses.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goal 2 of zero hunger further incorporates the need to achieve food security and improved nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture and ending rural hunger. Sustainable development of society thus, is difficult to achieve without solving the prevalent challenges of malnutrition and hunger. Estimates from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2015) indicate that about 792.5million people in 2015 continue to suffer from chronic hunger (FAO, 2015). In Nigeria, food insecurity prevalence in the low-income urban households and rural areas respectively stands at 79% and 71% (Akerele, Momoh, Aromolaran, Oguntona, & Shittu, 2013). Food security is determined by the conditions when all people, at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life (FAO, 2015). Since the beginning of this millennium, rising prices of food commodities have contributed to increasing the number of people facing food insecurity.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 commits all countries to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. As its first two targets, Sustainable Development Goals 2.1 pledges to “end hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round by 2030, and Sustainable Development Goal 2.2 commits countries, also by 2030, to end all forms of malnutrition.” Additionally, the targets under goal 2 promises to reach internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and include the commitment to address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons

The goal and targets address the triple burden of malnutrition: hunger, or insufficient intake of calories; deficiencies in proteins, vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients, also known as hidden hunger; and excess consumption of calories (sugar, fats, and others), leading to problems such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2017). Many countries are facing multiple burdens of malnutrition, and progress on global nutrition targets is slow or moving backwards (Global Nutrition Report, 2017). Adequately functioning food systems will be critical in achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2 to eliminate all forms of malnutrition.

However, the need for increased agricultural productivity and ensure food security in Nigerian economy can be achieved through effective agricultural education. O'Connor cited in Apata and Shitu (2013) sees the educational system of any society as an elaborate social mechanism, certain skills and attitudes that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in the society. As a result of the necessity for education, there has been the view that one who ceases to learn ceases to exist although the one may be living. According to Freire (1974:3-4) to “exist” is more than to “live” because it means being in the world and at the same time with the world. Thus, one who exists has attributes of transcending, discerning, communicating and participating with others who exist whereas one who is merely living does not possess these critical attributes. Therefore, one whose development of knowledge ceases has also stopped to exist, he is merely living. One of the major problems facing Agricultural productivity and food insecurity in Nigeria is illiteracy. This connotes a popular saying that Illiteracy is a disease. This over the years has posed great challenges to Agricultural development as well as productivity. Agricultural practices in Nigeria are generally affected by level of literacy of those practicing it especially in rural areas of the nation. Extension and research works are more tedious with low level of literacy of farmers. Although farmers usually have rich knowledge of local conditions and valuable practical

knowledge or experience of how best to successfully exploit their environment, they require innovation information generated from research and development to boost their productivity (Apata, 2010). Olawoye in Apata and Shitu (2013) observed that agricultural messages could enhance the productivity of farmers when they have access to it. This could be achieved through well-equipped Adult literacy scheme designed for farmers not only to access the information but having potency to interpret and utilize them for optimum productivity. Adult education therefore encompasses all education and training activities undertaken by adults for professional or personal reasons. Adult education has been defined in different ways by different scholars. This arises from the fact that it is academic, socio-economic, political, cultural and so on. People define it based on what prevails within their immediate environment (academic, home, work and so on) and their accumulated life experiences.

For instance, adult education has been seen as literacy education in developing countries like Nigeria where illiteracy level is high. This has affected its practices because it has focused so much on literacy education. However, the definition changes as the scope expands (Ugwu, 2013). According to Okedera in Ugwu and Mbalisi (2016), Adult education is a process whereby persons who attend school on a regular and full time basis (unless full time-time programmes are especially designed for adults) undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, undertakings or skills, appreciation and attitude or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems.

This view of adult and non-formal education gave impetus to Combs and Ahmed's (1974) definition of non-formal education, a term which encompasses adult education as an organized, systematic educational activity carried out outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-group in the population, adults as well as children: UNESCO, in her international conference in Nairobi, Kenya (1976) as reported in Nzeneri (2010:10) defined adult education as:

The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in school, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship whereby person regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced with independent, social, economic and cultural development

This implies that irrespective of the settings, content level and method adult and non-formal education seeks to empower adults with requisite knowledge and skills for personal improvement and maximum participation in the developments of their communities. Furthermore, in different countries of the world, adult and non-formal education programmes are designed to meet divergent needs such as well-fare and employment oriented activities aimed at serving the needs of the economy. In other words, adult and non-formal education activities should be relevant to the daily lives of the adults according to learners readiness to learn so that these adults can be helped to become self-reliant individuals (Knowles, 1980) cited in Osemwengie & Aminu (2020)

Adult education scheme has remained a viable tool for improving the productivity of agricultural sector in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that major step in the improvement of food production in Nigeria has been centered on increase in the number of the national and

international agro-research institutes. This is designed in such a way that farmers should be informed with appropriate technologies that are economically viable and culturally acceptable. However, educated farmers who are better informed and have better sources of Agricultural information couple with capability to interpret and utilized new innovations should have produce better with the available resources at their disposal. Adult education scheme supposed to equip farmers for better productivity Apata & Shitu (2013).

Statement of the Problem

One of the major problems facing agricultural productivity in Nigeria is illiteracy. This connotes a popular saying that illiteracy is a disease. This over the years has posed great challenges to agricultural productivity and food security. Agricultural practices in Nigeria are generally affected by level of literacy of those practicing it especially in rural areas of the nation. Adult education, through it extension education programmes are even more cumbersome with low level of literacy of farmers. Although farmers usually have rich knowledge of local conditions and valuable practical knowledge or experience of how best to successfully exploit their environment, they require innovation information generated from research and development to boost their productivity. Hence, adult education through it extension education programme could help to relay innovative message, new methods of farming, the use of disease resistance varieties and other to help enhance the productivity of farmers when they have access to it.

Also, violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen in most rural areas in Ovia South west local government area of Edo State has adversely affected and threaten the progress and development of most communities in the area. Agricultural productivity and food security has also been affected due the dispute over farmlands, disruption of transportation networks and inability of most farmers to go to their various farms without the fear of been molested and kidnapped for ransom. These situations have far reaching household economies in the communities due to the fact that agricultural sector accounts for over 70% of the overall employment and most farmer cannot risk their lives to continue farming and this can make them to neglect their perishable crops to go rotten. This study therefore investigates the role of adult education in fostering food security and agricultural productivity among rural communities in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of adult education in fostering food security and agricultural productivity among rural communities in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. identify the causes of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State?
- ii. determine adult education programmes needed for fostering food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State?
- iii. ascertain the various adult education programmes that have the greatest contributory impact
- iv. explore ways literacy education programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State

- v. determine the extent agricultural extension programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State

Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions were raised.

- i. What are the causes of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State?
- ii. What are the adult education programmes needed for fostering food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State?
- iii. Which of these adult education programmes have the greatest contributory impact
- iv. In what ways can literacy education programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State
- v. To what extent do agricultural extension programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State

Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The survey design attempts to examine the existence or occurrence of a phenomenon or variable. It is usually employed by collecting data and describing systematically the characteristic features or facts about a given population from a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The study population consists of the inhabitants of Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State. The population for the study were drawn from Twelve (12) wards. The population of the area is given to be One Hundred Fifty Thirty Five Thousand Three Hundred and Fifty Six (135,356) (National Population Commission, 2016). A sample of 260 respondents selected from thirteen (13) communities from ten wards that make up Ovia South West. Twenty (20) respondents respondent were selected from each of the communities through the purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire titled the “Role of Adult Education in Fostering Food Security and Agricultural Productivity among Rural Communities Questionnaire (RAEFSAPRCQ) were used to obtain data from respondents. The instrument has two sections; A and B. The Section A contains demographic or personal data of the respondents such as age, sex and marital status etc. While the section B contained information which enabled the researcher to elicit information considered pertinent to the research questions raised and to be answered. The questionnaire is structured in the form of a four point modified likert scale of Strongly agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly disagree 1 for all positively worded items and reverse for all negatively worded. Two experts in the area of psychometrics from the Department of Adult and Non-formal Education Faculty of Education, University of Benin helped to determine the face and content validity of the instrument. To determine the reliability level of the instrument in generating the required data, copies were pilot-tested through single test giving at a single sitting to twenty (20) respondents selected from the target population. The scores obtained for odd and even number items were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. A correlation index of 0.85 was obtained. Out of the two hundred and sixty (260) questionnaires that were administered, all were successfully retrieved thus demonstrating 100% retrieval rates. The data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was taken to be the standard for accepting or rejecting any item examined

Results

The data collected were analysed in line with the research questions raised. The results are presented in the Tables as shown below.

Research Question One

What are the cause of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State?

The Responses to Research Question 1 are Presented in Table 1

Table 1: Distribution of responses on the cause of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity in Ovia south west local government area of Edo State

ITEMS	N	Mean Score	Remark
Inefficient Agricultural Practices	260	3.12	Accepted
Violent Conflicts between Farmers & Herdsmen	260	2.98	Accepted
Climate Change	260	2.82	Accepted
Post-harvest lost	260	3.12	Accepted
Low budgetary allocation to agriculture	260	2.88	Accepted
Unavailability of disease resistance varieties and poor seed and seedling	260	2.70	Accepted
Lack of insecticide and pesticide	260	2.32	Not Accepted
Post-harvest lost due to bad roads and poor storage system	260	2.97	Accepted

The data in Table 1 above shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 met the mean score standard of 2.50 and, therefore, were accepted; while items 7 did not, and therefore were not accepted. This therefore means that cause of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity in Ovia south west local government area of Edo State are; inefficient agricultural practices, violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, climate change, post-harvest lost, low budgetary allocation to agriculture, unavailability of disease resistance varieties and poor seed and seedlings as well as post-harvest lost due to bad roads and poor storage system

Research Question Two

What are the adult education programmes needed for fostering food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State?

The Responses to Research Question 2 Presented in Table 2

Table 2: Distribution of responses on the adult education programmes needed for fostering food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State

ITEMS	N	Mean Score	Remark
Adult Basic Literacy Education	260	3.12	Accepted
Environmental Education	260	2.98	Accepted
Agricultural Extension services	260	2.82	Accepted
Community Development	260	3.12	Accepted
Peace Education and Intercultural Learning	260	2.88	Accepted
Cooperative Education	260	2.70	Accepted
Civic and Political Education	260	2.32	Not Accepted
Nomadic Education	260	2.22	Accepted

The data in Table 2 above shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 met the mean score standard of 2.50 and, therefore, were accepted; while items 7 and 8 did not, and therefore were not accepted. This therefore means that adult education programmes needed for fostering food security and agricultural productivity in the area are; adult basic education, environmental education, agricultural extension services, community development, peace education and inter-cultural learning and cooperative education

Research Question Three

Which of these adult education programmes have the greatest contributory effects?

The Responses to Research Question 3 Presented in Table 3

Table 3: Spearman Ranking of adult education programmes that have the greatest contributory effects on agricultural productivity and food security in the area

S/N	Items	Mean	Rank
	Adult basic literacy education	3.32	1 st
	Agricultural extension service	2.98	2 nd
	Peace Education and Inter-cultural Learning	1.42	3 rd
	Community development	1.39	4 th
	Environmental education	1.27	5 th

N = 260

It can be seen from data in Table 3 that adult education programmes that have the greatest contributory effects on agricultural productivity and food security in the area are; the Table reveals that Adult basic literacy education ranked first, agricultural extension services ranked second, peace education and inter-cultural learning ranked third while community education and environmental education were ranked fourth and fifth respectively. This means that adult basic education, agricultural extension services, peace education and inter-cultural learning are the adult education programmes that have the greatest contributory effects on agricultural productivity and food security in the area

Research Question Four

In what ways can literacy education programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State?

The Responses to Research Question 4 Presented in Table 4

Table 4: Distribution of responses on the ways literacy education programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in Ovia south west local government area of Edo State?

ITEMS	N	Mean Score	Remark
Basic literacy education provides farmers with the awareness about modern farming	260	2.98	Accepted
It encourages farmers to participate in cooperative efforts	260	3.28	Accepted
Basic Literacy education helps the famers to mobilize and organize others to end hunger and ensure food security	260	3.2	Accepted
Basic Literacy education enlightens rural farmers on the use of practices that protect and conserve natural resources to maintain a good environment for everyone	260	2.96	Accepted
Assisting local producers in developing strategies to make maximum use of agricultural support agencies to improve food production	260	2.92	Accepted

The data in Table 4 above shows that all the items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 met the mean score standard of 2.50 and, therefore, were accepted. This, therefore, means that the ways literacy education programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in the area by providing farmers with the needed awareness about modern farming, encouraging farmers to participate in cooperative efforts, helping farmers to mobilize and organize others to end hunger and ensure food security, enlightens rural farmers on the use of practices that protects and conserves natural resources to maintain a good environment for everyone and assisting local producers in developing strategies to make optimum use of agricultural supports agencies to improve food production.

Research Question Five

How does agricultural extension programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in Ovia south west local government area of Edo State?

The Responses to Research Question 5 Presented in Table 5

Table 5: Distribution of responses on how does agricultural extension programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State

ITEMS	N	Mean Score	Remark
Agricultural extension services provide farmers with access to farm inputs	260	2.98	Accepted
Agricultural extension services provide farmers access to credits facilities	260	3.28	Accepted
agricultural extension services relay new innovation and modern farming techniques to farmers	260	3.2	Accepted
They help assist farmers through improvement of farm yields through agro-marketing and market channels	260	2.96	Accepted
They educate farmers on the best methods of storing their farm produce	260	2.92	Accepted

The data in Table 5 above shows that all the items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 met the mean score standard of 2.50 and, therefore, were accepted. This, therefore, means that agricultural extension programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State by providing farmers access to farm inputs, credit facilities, relaying new innovation and modern farming techniques to farmers, they help assist farmers through improvement of farm yields through agro-marketing and market channels and they educate farmers on the best methods of storing their farm produce

Discussion of Findings

The result of this study has been quite instructive, informative and revealing. Findings from research question one revealed that that cause of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity in ovia south west local government area of Edo State are; inefficient agricultural practices, violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, climate change, post-harvest lost, low budgetary allocation to agriculture, unavailability of disease resistance varieties and poor seed and seedlings as well as post-harvest lost due to bad roads and poor storage system. This finding is in agreement with the study by Abdulmalik (2020), who revealed that flooding due to weather change, community conflicts and , violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen are the major cause of food insecurity in Nigeria. He further asserts that widespread of food insecurity are assessed according to three indicators: low average levels of calorie consumption, large fluctuations and large numbers of absolute poor. Food insecurity leads to under nutrition, poor health, low productivity and low income.

The findings of this study equally revealed that adult education programmes needed for fostering food security and agricultural productivity in the area are; adult basic education, environmental education, agricultural extension services, community development, peace education and inter-cultural learning and cooperative education. This finding is in agreement with the findings by Kobani & Egumah, (2022), who asserts that adult educational programmes such as vocation education, adults basic literacy and extension education services are used to enhance food security and increase agricultural productivity in Nigeria.

The finding of this study also revealed that adult basic education, agricultural extension services, peace education and inter-cultural learning are the adult education programmes that have the greatest contributory effects on agricultural productivity and food security in the

area. This finding corroborate with the findings by Kobani & Egumah, (2022), where they asserts that adult literacy education is crucial in our rural communities due to the high level of illiteracy, ignorance and superstitious belief system in our rural communities and it is only when they have acquired minimum level of literacy they accept and access other programmes.

The findings of this study equally revealed that the ways literacy education programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in the area by providing farmers with the needed awareness about modern farming, encouraging farmers to participate in cooperative efforts, helping farmers to mobilize and organize others to end hunger and ensure food security, enlightens rural farmers on the use of practices that protects and conserves natural resources to maintain a good environment for everyone and assisting local producers in developing strategies to make optimum use of agricultural supports agencies to improve food production. This finding corroborates the findings by Apata and Shitu (2013), where they opined that adult basic literacy opens the door for further education for farmers and individual advancement. They further assert that the values inherent in literacy cannot be over emphasized since they enhance improvement in the standard of living of the individual and society at large. Literacy enhances the status of men and women, reduces population rate, enhances environmental protection and generally raises the standard of living of individuals and societies.

The findings of this study also revealed that agricultural extension programme helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in the area by providing farmers access to farm inputs, credit facilities, relaying new innovation and modern farming techniques to farmers, they help assist farmers through improvement of farm yields through agro-marketing and market channels and they educate farmers on the best methods of storing their farm produce. This findings in consonance with that of Cornor cited Kobani (2022), who asserts that development institutions focused on agriculture have prioritized providing support for smallholder farmers to improve their economic and social conditions, one of which is through access to grants and loans. Item 4 however, showed a disagreement to a positive influence of the actual accessing of grants and loans by farmers due to issues like lack of trust by the lending institutions poor leadership vision in the agricultural sector, high interest rates, diversion of loans by farmers, among others.

Conclusion

Based on the findings made from data collected and analyzed, it was concluded that the cause of food insecurity and poor agricultural productivity are; inefficient agricultural practices, violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, climate change, post-harvest lost, low budgetary allocation to agriculture, unavailability of disease resistance varieties and poor seed and seedlings as well as post-harvest lost due to bad roads and poor storage system. It was also concluded that adult education programmes needed for fostering food security and agricultural productivity in the area are; adult basic education, environmental education, agricultural extension services, community development, peace education and inter-cultural learning and cooperative education. It was further concluded that adult education through it adult literacy and extension education programmes helps to ensure food security and agricultural productivity in the area by providing farmers access to farm inputs, credit facilities, relaying new innovation and modern farming techniques to farmers, they help assist farmers through improvement of farm yields through agro-marketing and market channels and they educate farmers on the best methods of storing their farm produce.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

1. Farmers should be encouraged to participate in adult education scheme through the provision of incentives such as subsidized agricultural inputs and good market for agricultural produce through the scheme.
2. The government should make as a matter of urgency provide functioning adult education programmes in our rural communities because adult with the myriads of its programmes such as peace education, extension education, community development and cooperative education will help to resolve the issue farmers in our rural communities are currently facing that has hindered increased agricultural productivity and food security.
3. Government should provide basic social amenities such as primary health services, electricity, accessible roads network, competent adult education officers, conducive environments and high quality classrooms for learn

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