
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ADULT LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN LITERACY EDUCATION CENTRES, ILORIN METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Adult literacy remains the most important weapon with which national development plan can help men and women to develop themselves. Skills in literacy education enable the people to make meaningful contributions towards the national development of their country. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised of all the adult learners in Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 120 adult learners from the literacy education centers in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled *Learning Environment and Adult Learners' Academic Performance (LEALAP)*. Pilot study was conducted in Literacy Education Center, Adeta, Kwara State. A Performance Test (PT) which contained 10 items (with plausible options) was administered and scored dichotomously to determine adult learners' academic performance. There was a significant prediction between learning environment and male adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis ($r_{(106)} = 0.713$; $p < 0.05$).

There was a significant prediction between learning environment and female adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis ($r_{(90)} = 0.713$; $p < 0.05$). Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that learning environment should be made more conducive and attractive to adult learners in literacy centers.

Key words: Adult learners, academic performance, instructional materials, learning environment, literacy center and physical facilities.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the most important component of human resources development and is accorded a pride of place in many countries. There is no doubt that the importance of education cannot be underscored because there is no country that has succeeded without educating its people. Education also helps to improve security, health, prosperity and ecological balance in the world. It encourages social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance, national and international cooperation.

Akomolafe (2009) described education as a single most effective means of curbing population growth, reducing child mortality, eradicating poverty and ensuring democracy, peace and sustainable development. The primary purpose of teaching and learning process is to bring about in the learner desirable change in behavior through critical thinking. This process however, does not take place in vacuum but in an environment structured to facilitate learning. Thus, learning environment has also been emphasized as an essential requirement for smooth teaching and learning process to take place (NTI, 2008). A good learning environment presents learning as a lifelong enterprise and enables adult learners to discover appropriate value system that can be their compass for self-awareness and national consciousness.

According to Mitchell (2018) the environment in which you study can have an effect on how efficient your study time is. He identified noise, interruptions, lighting, temperature, comfort, instructional materials, facilities such as buildings and equipment to have potential effect on study habits and therefore, can influence the academic performance of adult learners. Academic performance has to do with what adult learners are able to accomplish through the execution of class work in the literacy centers.

Stiggings (2010) sees academic performance as something a learner do or achieve at school, college or university, in class, in a laboratory or field work.

Learning environment encompasses all resources human and material, programmes and opportunities, for students to use these resources creatively and imaginatively to learn and develop their potentials. According to Oduwaye (2011), learning environment refers to the context in which learning takes place, it is the surrounding circumstance which effects learning. An environment in which learning occurs can be as wide as particular society and it may be viewed as an educational institution. It grows in a socio-political-economic environment and there can be no education without a society. Thus, a society provides a macro environment in which a school is located and from which it draws its resources. Within the school, there is also a macro environment which influences the operation and the extent to which educational objectives can be achieved. Therefore, the development of an individual, through knowledge and skills acquisition in school, could be influenced positively or negatively by the socio-political and economic conditions of the environment.

This is probably why Akubue (2006) stated that a good learning environment has the advantage of fostering desirable behaviour and attitude; developing problem solving, skills and creative thought; encouraging students' interrelationship and fostering centered methods.

School environment reflects the physical and psychological aspect of the school that are more susceptible to change and provide the pre-conditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place (Junggle, 2003). Tshui and Cai (2011) described learning environment as an orderly environment in which the school family feels valued and able to pursue the schools mission free from concern about disruptions and safety. Conducive learning environment has been identified as essential for effective teaching and learning to take place. Olutola (2008) postulated that school learning environment which includes instructional spaces, administrative spaces, circulation spaces, spaces for conveniences and accessories are essential in facilitating teaching-learning process.

Learning environment is reflected by curricular and co-curricular activities in which teachers and learners engage in classrooms, libraries, laboratories and other places in the school. Social environment is created through interaction among teachers and learners in classrooms and other places in the school.

The cultural environment consists of rules, regulations, values and discipline. It also includes all school activities which are meant to initiate learners into societal culture and the dominant among these features is the physical environment as described by Mark (2007) and Alabi (2011) that school physical features consists of the basic systems and structures which are viable and are needed by schools or institutions in order to function effectively and to fulfill the purpose for which it was established.

Physical learning environment if adequately provided and maintained is capable of influencing students and teachers positively as suggested by Olagboye (2004) physical learning environment reflects the political, social, economic and intellectual activities of given school. He referred to them as physical resources, school plant or school facilities. Bosque and Dore (2008) asserted that teaching and learning environment are out to implement six functions: inform, communicate, collaborate, produce, scaffold, and manage. They added that the learning environment refers to the whole range of components and activities which learning happens. OECD (2011) described learning environment as a physical space that supports multiple and diverse teaching and learning programmes and pedagogies.

Learning environment in its narrow sense is a conventional classroom and in its widest sense, is a combination of formal and informal education system where learning takes place both inside and outside the school for the purpose of achieving the set objectives (Manninen, 2017). Dikko (2018) asserted that learning environment is a complex structure that includes teaching equipment, sources of information and events within and outside the schools where students can take part in the learning process both directly and virtually.

In the opinions of Cohen (2006) learning environment is the quality and character of school life. It is based on patterns of school, life experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures. A good school environment fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support peoples' feelings socially, emotionally and physically safe. According to Esan, Obashoro and Osondu (2008) the school as a learning environment comprises physical, academic, social and cultural environments. The physical environment is made up of school location, physical features and structures within and outside the school.

Buildings, equipment and infrastructures available within a school and its surroundings also constitute its physical environment.

Cotton, (2006) has identified components of learning environment as appearance and physical plants; leadership and decision making; environment that is welcoming and conducive for learning; environment that promotes communication and interactions; environment that promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem and the environment that promotes learning and self-fulfillment. He characterized environment that is welcoming and conducive to comprise the following; normal class population, students should feel safe and comfortable everywhere in the school environment, class orderliness should be maintained, classrooms and grounds should be clean and well-maintained, noise free environment, classrooms should be well furnished and staff members should have access to sufficient books.

Osondu (2008) in his handbook on Adult Education Principles and Practices described Adult as a person who is physically and psychologically mature and who is socially, economically and politically responsible. In his words, physical maturity implies that the adult is capable of picking a life partner, being a parent, raising a family and managing home.

Thus, adult literacy as a basic component of adult education includes all the activities with which educational purposes are carried out by people who are engaged in the ordinary business of life. This branch of education thus stems directly from the people and it enables its recipients to grapple successfully with the problems of life and contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities. No society can achieve mass literacy without effective programme for her adult members since it is literate adults who are in the best position to educate and advise children in ways of conforming to society values and issues (Obanya 2007). Adult literacy remains the most important weapon with which national development plan can help men and women to develop themselves. Skills in literacy education enable the people to make meaningful contributions towards the national development of their country. They represent the labour force, managerial skill and expertise required for rapid development

Academic performance really means three things; the ability to study and remember facts, being able to study effectively and see how facts fit together and form larger patterns of knowledge and being able to think for yourself in relation to facts and thirdly, to be able to communicate (Coulson, 2008).

According to Pruet (2010), it is the level of achievement attain through the combination of inputs from students' motivation and conduct. In the views of Adediwura and Tayo (2007) academic performance is generally referred to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies, but there are quite a number of factors that determine the level and quality of students' academic performance. Tinto (2007) maintained that students require academic, social, and personal support from their school. As supported by Astin (2004) theory of involvement, he suggests that students learn more when they are more involved in both the academic and social aspects of the school experience. Consequently, learning has important social and cognitive dimensions and occurs most effectively when the school provides a positive social environment with a strong sense of community relationship.

Light has been identified as another important element that increases students' motivation to learn and it has direct influence on students' performance (Samani, 2011). Another important determinant, which shouldn't be neglected, is the family. Family is the primary social system for children of all cultures across the country in particular and Africa in general (Jago and Tanner, 2009).

Rollins and Thomas (2009) asserted that high parental controls are associated with high achievement of academic activities. Dunn (2018) pointed out that teachers and the physical environment are the two major tools that can bring about new outcomes in teaching and learning process. Rutter, Dukor & Fair (2009) submitted in their various studies that conducive learning environment can have positive effect on both attitudes and achievements of students.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the theory of classical conditioning theory as propounded by Ivan Pavlov (1849 ó 1936). Papalia, Feldman and Olds (2007) asserted that Stimulus-Response is a type of learning which is based on the association of stimulus that does not ordinarily elicit a particular response with another stimulus that does not elicit a response. While studying the functioning of the digestive system, Ivan Pavlov encountered an unforeseen problem. The dogs in his experiment salivated not only upon actually eating but also when they saw the food, noticed the man who usually brought it or even heard his footsteps. Pavlov began to study this phenomenon, which he called, conditioning. Since the type of conditioning emphasized was a classical one quite different from the conditioning emphasized by other psychologists at the later stage, it has been renamed classical conditioning.

The above experiment thus, brought to light four essential elements of conditioning process. The first element was a natural stimulus, technically known as unconditioned stimulus (US) referred to as food. It resulted in a natural response called the unconditioned response (UR). This response constituted the second element. The third element was artificial stimulus that is the ringing of the bell which was technically known as a conditioned stimulus (CS). It was substituted for the natural stimulus (food). To begin with, the conditioned stimulus did not evoke the desired response, (CR). The fourth element was the chain of the conditioning process. However, as a result of conditioning, one learns to produce behaviours in the form of a conditioned response to the conditioned stimulus.

The implication of classical conditioning theory to this study is that in our day to day life, we are usually exposed to simple classical conditioning. Fear, love and hatred towards an object, phenomenon or event are created through conditioning. A father who, when he comes home from workplace, always rebukes and punishes his child without caring to know the basic reasons may condition his child to fear him, or develop anxiety reactions at the time he returns home. The child may further develop a feeling of hatred towards his father or even discontent and a hostile attitude towards his home.

Similarly, an instructor with his defective methods of teaching or improper behaviours may condition adult learners to develop distaste and hatred towards him, what he teaches and even the learning environment. On the contrary, affection, a loving attitude and sympathetic treatment given to the learners by the facilitators in the literacy center may produce learners with good results. Thus, much of our behaviour in the shape of interest, attitudes, habits, sense of application or criticism, moods and temperaments are fashioned through conditioning. The process of conditioning not only helps us in learning of undesirable habits, unhealthy attitudes, superstitions, fear and phobias through reconditioning.

It has been observed in the recent past that adult literacy centers in Nigeria are not living up to expectation in delivering quality education expected of the system. A lot of problems seem to be bedeviling the adult literacy centers ranging from inadequate facilities, old and dilapidated structures, inadequate instructional materials and unqualified literacy facilitators there by making the system ineffective (Wanjobi, 2011). Schools need to be effective so as to be able to deliver the good things expected of them at every point in time. School effectiveness in this context refers to the extent to which schools are able to accomplish their pre-determined objectives

The findings of this study will be of relevance to adult learners because it will provide insight into the problems whose solutions might help in taking specific actions which will efficiently and effectively address the poor performance of learners as a result of poor nature of our adult centers in Nigeria today. Again, findings of this study are of relevant to adult facilitators who are the principal agents of curriculum implementation because it provides recommendations that would help them to make appropriate utilization of learning environment to create conducive atmosphere that would enhance effective teaching and learning. It is a fact that people work better in places where they feel comfortable and it is believed that the results of this work offered recommendations on how to improve poor conditions of adult centers thereby creating enabling environment for adult facilitators' job satisfaction which no doubt will have positive effect on learners' learning outcome.

The major rationale for this study is to examine learning environment as a predictor of adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis. Specifically, this study intends to:

1. Determine the profile of learning environment of adult learners in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis.

2. Find out the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis.
3. Ascertain the extent to which learning environment predicts female adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis
4. Ascertain the extent to which learning environment predicts female adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

RQ1 What is the profile of learning environment of adult learners in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis?

RQ2: What is the level of academic performance of adult learners in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis?

H₀₁: There is no significant prediction between learning environment and male adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis

H₀₂: There is no significant prediction between learning environment and female adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification. The population of this study comprised of all the adult learners in Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select one hundred and twenty (120) adult learners from the literacy education centers in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled Learning Environment and Adult Learners' Academic Performance (LEALAP). The questionnaire was constructed in four-likert format of always, sometimes, rarely and never. In order to ensure the validity of the instruments, the instrument was given to the lecturers in the Department of Adult and Primary, University of Ilorin for critique and improvement. This was done in order to establish the face and content validity of the instrument. Corrections made by the experts were used to produce the final copy of the instrument. A Pilot study was conducted in Literacy Education Center, Adeta, Kwara State, Nigeria where fifty questionnaires were administered to adult learners.

The data collected was analyzed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), the result obtained was 0.83.

RESULTS

RQ1: What is the profile of learning environment of adult learners in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis?

A cut-off score of 2.50 was used as the baseline for determining participants response since the questionnaire items were structured in a four-response-type. Therefore, items found with mean scores closed to 4.0, 3.0, 2.0 and 1.0 were remarked as always, sometimes, rarely and never respectively.

Table 1: Profile of Learning Environment of Adult Learners in Literacy Centers in Ilorin Metropolis

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1.	I enjoy reading at home	2.89	0.56	Sometimes
2.	I prefer doing my assignment at home than any other place	2.86	0.43	Sometimes
3.	I found my home a conducive environment to read	2.78	0.33	Sometimes
4.	I easily understand what I read at home	3.28	0.29	Sometimes
5.	I prefer reading at school	3.55	0.48	Always

	because I get support while reading			
6.	I am provided with functional toilet, good lighting, adequate ventilation and cooling system in the literacy centers	3.59	1.31	Always
7.	I participate in sport activities during free period	3.67	1.67	Always
8.	I do the school activities with my friends	3.14	1.52	Sometimes
9.	I have access to my facilitators during and after class for any clarification	3.42	0.89	Sometimes

Table 1 shows that adult literacy learners always prefer to read at centers because they get support while reading and are provided with functional toilet, good lighting, adequate ventilation and cooling system in adult literacy centers and they always participate in sport activities during free period. In the same vein, adult literacy learners sometimes prefer reading and doing their assignment at home than any other place; they found their home a conducive environment to read.

RQ2: What is the level of academic performance of adult learners in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis?

Performance Test (PT) which contained 10 items (with plausible options) which were administered and scored dichotomously was used to determine adult learners' academic performance. Each correct option was allotted 3marks. Thus, adult learners whose score fell below 0 - 10; 11 - 20 and 21 - 30 were categorised as having low, average and high level of academic performance respectively. The summary statistics of adult learners' academic performance in the test is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Level of Academic Performance of Adult Learners in Ilorin Metropolis

Performance	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage
High	20 - 30	64	32
Average	11 - 20	94	47
Low	0 - 10	42	21
Total		200	100

As shown in Table 2, out of 200 (100%) adult learners sampled for this study, 64 (32%) of them had high level of performance; 94 (47%) of the adult learners were of average level of academic performance while 42 (21%) of the adult learners were of low level of academic performance. This shows that the majority of adult learners in Ilorin Metropolis were of average level of academic performance.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

The hypotheses generated in this study were analyzed using inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant prediction between learning environment and male adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient of the Prediction between Learning Environment and Male Adult Learners' Academic Performance in Literacy Centers in Ilorin Metropolis

Male Adult Learners	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-cal	Sig.
Learning Environment	10	33.37	4.1			
Academic Performance	8	26.72	3	10	.71	0.00
	10		2.3	6	3	0
	8		9			

*Significant at p<0.05

As revealed in Table 3, the calculated r-value (0.713) was obtained with a p-value (0.000) when computed at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis two was not retained. Therefore, there was a significant prediction between learning environment and male adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis ($r_{(106)} = 0.713; p < 0.05$).

This shows that male adult learners' learning environment and their academic performance were positively related.

H02: There is no significant prediction between learning environment and female adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis

Table 4:
Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient of the Prediction between Learning Environment and female Adult Learners' Academic Performance in Literacy Centers in Ilorin Metropolis

Female Adult Learners	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-cal	Sig.
Learning Environment	92	28.87	5.27			
Academic Performance	92	19.36	4.82	90	.571	0.000

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

As revealed in Table 4, the calculated r-value (0.571) was obtained with a p-value (0.000) when computed at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis three was not retained. Therefore, there was a significant prediction between learning environment and female adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis ($r_{(90)} = 0.713$; $p < 0.05$). This shows that female adult learners' learning environment and their academic performance were positively related.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that adult literacy learners always prefer to read at centers because they get support while reading and were provided with functional toilet, good lighting, adequate ventilation and cooling system in adult literacy centers and they always participate in sport activities during free period. In the same vein, adult literacy learners sometimes prefer reading and doing their assignment at home than any other place; they found home very conducive environment to read This result corroborates Fafuna (2010)) who identified two aspects of school environment namely physical and social environment. Thus, unfavourable school environment can discourage the learners and they become less willing to learn, this invariably affect their interest in the whole academic process. In the same vein, this finding is in line with Obanya (2007) whose study revealed that student development is greatly influenced by its surroundings and the most important environment for students is the family. The family is a lesson personality builder and behavior of a person since childhood and greatly influences one's behavior, attitudes and thoughts into adulthood.

The second finding of this study indicated that adult learners sampled for this study, 64 (32%) of them had high level of performance; 94 (47%) of the adult learners were of average level of academic performance while 42 (21%) of the adult learners were of low level of academic performance. This shows that the majority of adult learners in Ilorin Metropolis were of average level of academic performance. This outcome tallies with the majority of the respondents in Ilorin East Local Government Area, Kwara State who had average performance in Social Studies. However, the result of this study is not line with Asabiaka (2014) who found that students' overall academic performance in social studies was low. This result supports Pruett(2010) who found students to be of medium level of academic performance in social studies. Student development is greatly influenced by its surroundings and the most important environment for students is the family (Obanya, 2007).

The third finding of this study revealed that there was a significant prediction between learning environment and male adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis. This shows that male adult learners' learning environment and their academic performance are positively related.

Also, the outcome of this study indicated that there was a significant influence of classroom building on adult learners' academic performance in Ilorin Metropolis. This implies that learning environment of adult learners has significant impact on their academic performance. This is consistent with the assertion of Kalyani and Radhakrishna (2002) that the school as a learning environment comprises physical, academic, social and cultural environments. This result may be true because the physical environment of school is made up of school location, physical features, classroom building and structures within and outside the school. The classroom building or physical facilities in literacy centers must be attractive and conducive so as to increase the interest of adult learners in their studies.

The last finding of this study showed that there was a significant prediction between learning environment and female adult learners' academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis. This shows that female adult learners' learning environment and their academic performance are positively related. This finding lends credence to Esan, Obashoro and Osondu (2008) who discovered that positive learning environment can improve academic performance of students. This result may be true due to the fact that adult learners must be psychologically ready and prepared before success could be attained.

The adult literacy centers must be able to prepare adult learners adequately and get them psychologically fit for better academic performance. This is because there are many things that could distract and disturb adult learners psychologically, and eventually prevent them from doing well academically.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It could be concluded that learning environment favourable to adult learners usually have positive impact in their academic performance in Ilorin Metropolis. Adult learners always prefer to read at centers because they get support while reading and they are provided with functional toilet, good lighting, adequate ventilation and cooling system in adult literacy centers and they always participate in sport activities during free period. As such there is a significant prediction between learning environment and adult learners academic performance in literacy centers in Ilorin Metropolis. Though, the majority of adult learners in Ilorin Metropolis were of average in terms of academic performance

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that learning environment should be made more conducive and attractive to adult learners in literacy centers. This will help adult learners to develop more interest in learning. The literacy centers should be devoid of noise or any other distractions so as to enhance academic

achievement of adult learners. Also, more instructional materials should be used in literacy centers during teaching and learning for adult learners. This will help them to be able to remember what they have learnt. Relevant instructional materials should be provided by the centers for each topic or subjects so as to improve academic performance of adult learners.

Similarly, the use of peer group method of teaching should be minimized or avoided by adult literacy centers. Appropriate instructional methods should be adopted in literacy centers for teaching adult learners. Such instructional method should be one that will encourage every learner to learn and devoid of distractions.

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