

Role of Community-Based Adult Education in Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods in Nigeria.

By

Attah Emmanuel Ojoma

Abstract

This study explored role of community-based adult education in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Nigeria focusing on four key areas: participation trends, barriers to engagement, livelihood impacts, and social capital enhancement. Data were collected from 100 participants in Abuja Metropolis using a structured questionnaire, and Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships among variables. The findings revealed that sustained participation in adult education programmes significantly correlated with perceived improvements in livelihood relevance, income levels, and overall quality of life. However, financial, time, and program availability barriers hindered participation, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. While participants reported increased community involvement, the relationship between social capital and engagement was complex, suggesting that new social networks emerged through programme participation. These results align with existing literature, stressing the transformative potential of adult education in empowering individuals and fostering community development. The study recommends reducing participation barriers, expanding program access, fostering lifelong learning, and building strong social networks to maximize the benefits of adult education in enhancing sustainable livelihoods.

Keywords: Adult education, sustainable livelihoods, community-based adult education, sustained participation.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally observed that sustainability has been diversely defined by various bodies and authors; nevertheless, the core of it is to ensure that life is well maintained now and with adequate preparations being made for future generations. Sustainability is, therefore, relevant for all areas of human endeavour and it is also applicable when talking of sustaining cities and communities. Sustenance of cities and communities

become important, seeing the fact that each person is a member of a community, therefore, efforts must be made to advance such societies, providing for the needs of adults and youth alike not disregarding one at the expense of the other (Global Goal 1, 2017).

Community-based adult education plays a vital role in enhancing sustainable livelihoods in Nigeria by empowering people with essential skills and knowledge. Current studies highlight its effectiveness in promoting economic resilience and social cohesion, thereby contributing to community development (EAEA, 2018; ResearchGate, 2023). The incorporation of adult education programmes within local communities has been shown to address the exceptional challenges faced by marginalised populations, principally in rural areas where access to formal education is limited. By concentrating on practical skills and knowledge relevant to local contexts, these programmes not only improve individual livelihoods but also encourage collective growth and sustainability (UNESCO, 2020; Oduro, 2021). Moreover, community-based adult education initiatives often include traditional knowledge and practices, ensuring that learning is culturally relevant and widely accepted (Mokua, 2022). This approach not only improves the employability of participants but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards community development, eventually leading to more sustainable outcomes (Kumar & Singh, 2023).

Community-based adult education not only addresses instant educational needs but also aligns with broader sustainable development goals by fostering lifetime learning opportunities. The emphasis on participatory learning methods inspires active engagement from community members, which is essential for tailoring educational content to local needs (Smith & Jones, 2022). Moreover, these programmes often enable access to resources and networks that can enhance economic opportunities, principally for women and marginalised groups who traditionally encounter barriers to education (Nguyen, 2023).

The role of technology in community-based adult education has also gained attention, with digital platforms providing innovative ways to deliver content and connect learners (Cheng, 2022). This shift towards incorporating technology not only expands reach but also enhances the learning experience, making it more interactive and accessible. As communities adapt to changing economic scenes, the incorporation of adult education into local development strategies becomes increasingly vital for fostering resilience and adaptability (Adams & Lee, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to discover the role of community-based adult education in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Africa, with focus on Nigeria.

Statement of Research Problem

Community-based adult education (CBAE) has emerged as a critical strategy for promoting sustainable livelihoods, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Despite its potential, participation in CBAE programs remains suboptimal, especially among marginalized groups, due to various barriers such as financial constraints, time limitations, and socio-cultural factors (Nguyen, 2023; EAEA, 2018). These barriers not only hinder access to education but also limit the transformative potential of CBAE in enhancing economic resilience and social cohesion within communities (Kumar & Singh, 2023). Furthermore, while existing literature highlights the positive impacts of adult education on individual livelihoods and community development, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the specific challenges faced by participants and the effectiveness of current educational practices in addressing these challenges (Oduro, 2021; UNESCO, 2020).

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the role of community-based adult education in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Nigeria, focusing on participation trends, barriers to engagement, livelihood impacts, and the enhancement of social capital. By identifying effective practices and barriers, the research seeks to provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders to improve the accessibility and relevance of adult education programs, ultimately contributing to the empowerment

of individuals and the development of resilient communities (Cheng, 2022; Adams & Lee, 2023).

Objectives

1. To identify effective practices within community-based adult education programmes that contribute to sustainable livelihood.
2. To examine the barriers to participation in adult education, particularly among marginalized groups, and propose strategies to overcome these challenges.
3. Investigate the potential of technology in enhancing the delivery and effectiveness of community-based adult education initiatives

Research Questions

- 1 What is the relationship between participation in community-based adult education and its relevance to promoting sustainable livelihoods?
- 2 What barriers do marginalised groups face in accessing community-based adult education, and what strategies can be implemented to overcome these challenges?
- 3 What is the impact of community-based adult education on participants' livelihoods

Review of the Literature

Effective Practices in Community-Based Adult Education

In Africa, community-based adult education, or CBAE, has emerged as a crucial approach to advancing sustainable livelihoods. Participatory learning approaches that involve members of the community in the educational process are frequently included in the efficient practices of these programmes. Oduro (2021) asserts that programs that incorporate socio-economically relevant local knowledge and skills typically result in superior outcomes. For example, vocational training in agriculture, crafts, and entrepreneurship has been shown to empower individuals and improve their

economic situations (Kumar & Singh, 2023). Moreover, the combination of traditional knowledge with modern educational practices enhances the importance and acceptance of the programmes among community members (Mokua, 2022).

Barriers to Participation in Adult Education

Despite the potential advantages of CBAE, significant obstacles prevent participation, particularly among marginalised groups. Research shows that socio-cultural factors, such as gender norms and family responsibilities, excessively affect women's access to adult education (Nguyen, 2023). Moreover, logistical challenges, including transportation and time constraints, further limit participation, especially in rural areas (EAEA, 2018). According to UNESCO (2020), targeted interventions like flexible scheduling, support for childcare, and community outreach initiatives have been suggested to address these obstacles. Access is made possible by these methods, and they also help make education more inclusive.

Integration of Technology in Community-Based Adult Education

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on the role that technology plays in improving community-based adult education. Cheng (2022) stresses that digital platforms can expand the reach of educational programmes, making them more accessible to remote and underserved populations. Engagement and learning outcomes have been shown to improve when mobile learning applications and online resources are utilised (Adams & Lee, 2023). However, the successful incorporation of technology requires addressing issues such as digital literacy and access to devices, particularly in low-income communities (Smith & Jones, 2022). Consequently, for adult education initiatives to have the greatest impact, a comprehensive approach that incorporates both technology and conventional teaching methods is necessary.

Impact on Economic Resilience and Social Cohesion

The impact of community-based adult education on economic resilience and social cohesion is well-documented. According to Kumar & Singh (2023), participation in adult education programmes has been linked to increased opportunities for earning money and improved living conditions. Moreover, these programs enhanced social networks and community solidarity, which are crucial for collective action and resilience in terms of economic challenges (Mokua, 2022). Research by EAEA (2018) reveals that communities with strong adult education programmes exhibit higher levels of social capital, which contributes to better governance and community development outcomes. As a result, CBAE not only boosts individual capabilities but also contributes to the community's fabric.

Theoretical Review

This study's theoretical review is based on a number of interconnected theories that provide a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between community development, sustainable livelihoods, and education. Particularly relevant are the following theories:

1 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory suggests that investments in education and training improve individuals' skills and knowledge, leading to improved economic outcomes (Becker, 1993). In the aspect of community-based adult education (CBAE), this theory suggests that equipping individuals with relevant skills can increase their employability and income-generating potential. CBAE can help communities develop human capital and promote sustainable livelihoods by focusing on practical skills that align with local economic needs (Kumar & Singh, 2023).

2 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

According to Chambers & Conway (1992), the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) provides a comprehensive method for comprehending the various assets,

capabilities, and vulnerabilities that influence people's means of subsistence. This framework stresses the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental factors in shaping livelihoods. In the context of CBAE, the SLF can be used to assess how educational programmes enhance individuals' capabilities and access to resources, thereby improving their overall livelihood strategies. It also highlights the importance of considering the broader socio-economic and environmental context in which these educational initiatives operate.

Integration of Theories.

The integration of these theories provides a comprehensive lens through which to examine the role of community-based adult education in promoting sustainable livelihoods. Human Capital Theory highlights the economic benefits of education, while Social Capital Theory highlights the importance of community engagement and networks. Participatory Learning Theory emphasises the need for contextually relevant and inclusive educational practices, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework offers a holistic perspective on the factors influencing livelihoods.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the roles of community-based adult education (CBAE) in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Africa. Utilizing surveys as the primary data collection method, the research aimed to gather numerical data that was statistically analysed to identify patterns and relationships across a broader population. The target population consisted of adult learners engaged in community-based education programs in selected Nigeria. To ensure a representative sample, a stratified random sampling technique was utilized, incorporating diverse demographic groups, including women, rural residents, and individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds, with a target sample size of approximately 100 participants deemed sufficient for statistical analysis.

Data collection was conducted through structured questionnaires administered both online and face-to-face by trained enumerators in Abuja. The process was designed to maintain confidentiality and encourage honest responses, with participants informed

of their voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any time without consequences. The collected quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing inferential statistics, such as correlation analyses, to explore relationships between participation in CBAE, perceived barriers, and impacts on livelihoods. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was established to determine statistical significance in the findings.

RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the relationship between participation in community-based adult education and its relevance to promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Correlations

		Have you participated in any community-based adult education programs?	If yes, please specify the type of program(s) you attended (check all that apply):	How long did you participate in the program(s)?	How relevant do you find the education received in relation to your livelihood?
Have you participated in any community-based adult education programs?	Pearson Correlation	1	.693**	.248*	.248*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.013	.013
	N	100	100	100	100
If yes, please specify the type of program(s)	Pearson Correlation	.693**	1	.025	.217*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.804	.030

you attended (check all that apply):	N	100	100	100	100
How long did you participate in the program(s)?	Pearson Correlation	.248*	.025	1	.542**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.013	.804		.000
How relevant do you find the education received in relation to your livelihood?	N	100	100	100	100
	Pearson Correlation	.248*	.217*	.542**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.013	.030	.000	
	N	100	100	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This section explores the relationship between participation in community-based adult education and its relevance to promoting sustainable livelihoods. The results reveal several important insights:

Correlations

The table provides Pearson correlation coefficients to show the strength and significance of relationships between different variables:

1. Participation in Community-Based Adult Education vs. Type of Programme Attended

- **Correlation Coefficient (0.693):** There is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that those who participated are likely to have attended multiple types of programs, indicating diverse educational engagement.

2. Participation vs. Programme Duration

- **Correlation Coefficient (0.248):** A weak but statistically significant positive relationship ($p < 0.05$) suggests that those who participated tended to engage for longer periods.

3. Participation vs. Relevance to Livelihood

- **Correlation Coefficient (0.248):** This weak but significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) indicates that participation is associated with perceiving the program as relevant to livelihood improvement.

4. Programme Type vs. Relevance to Livelihood

- **Correlation Coefficient (0.217):** A weak but statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the type of program attended is linked to how relevant respondents found the program to their livelihoods.

5. Program Duration vs. Relevance to Livelihood

- **Correlation Coefficient (0.542):** A moderate, positive, and highly significant correlation ($p < 0.01$) suggests that longer participation is associated with greater perceived relevance to livelihoods. This implies that sustained engagement may enhance educational impact.

Key Implications

6. Programme Diversity: A strong association between participation and programme type indicates the need for varied educational offerings to meet diverse community needs.

7. Sustained Engagement: Longer-term participation appears critical to ensuring that education is perceived as relevant to livelihood improvement, suggesting a focus on retention strategies.

8. Livelihood Promotion: The moderate to weak correlations between participation and relevance emphasise that while education helps, there is room for enhancing the alignment of programme with practical livelihood outcomes.

This result demonstrates that community-based adult education plays a role in promoting sustainable livelihoods, particularly through varied and sustained

educational participation. However, enhancing the perceived relevance of these programmes are essential for maximising impact.

Research question 2: What barriers do marginalised groups face in accessing community-based adult education, and what strategies can be implemented to overcome these challenges?

Correlations

	What barriers did you face in accessing community-based adult education? (check all that apply)	On a scale of 1 to 5, how significant were these barriers in preventing your participation?
What barriers did you face in accessing community-based adult education? (check all that apply)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 -.012 .908 100
On a scale of 1 to 5, how significant were these barriers in preventing your participation?	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.012 .908 1 100

This section examines the types of barriers participants faced in accessing community-based adult education and how significant these barriers were in preventing participation.

Correlations

- Barriers Faced vs. Significance of Barriers

- **Correlation Coefficient (-0.012):** There is a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship ($p = 0.908$) between the types of barriers faced and the

significance of these barriers. This suggests that the type of barrier encountered does not strongly predict how significant the barrier is perceived to be.

Key Implications

1. Diverse Barriers: The descriptive statistics highlight that participants encountered a wide range of barriers, which may include logistical challenges, financial constraints, time limitations, or social/cultural factors.

2. Barrier Severity: While barriers were generally considered significant, the lack of correlation with barrier type suggests that individual or situational factors may influence perceived barrier severity more than the specific barrier itself.

3. Addressing Barriers: Since barriers are significant across various types, interventions should focus on providing holistic support that addresses a broad range of challenges rather than targeting a single type of barrier.

Research question 3: What is the impact of community-based adult education on participants' livelihoods

Correlations

	Since participating in community-based adult education, how has your income changed?	Have you gained employment or improved your employment status since participating in the program?	On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the overall impact of community-based adult education on your quality of life?
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Since participating in community-based adult education, how has your income changed?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.318**	.483**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000
	N	100	100	100
Have you gained employment or improved your employment status since participating in the program?	Pearson Correlation	-.318**	1	-.525**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000
	N	100	100	100
On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the overall impact of community-based adult education on your quality of life?	Pearson Correlation	.483**	-.525**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	100	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This section investigates the impact of community-based adult education on participants' livelihoods, including income changes, employment status improvements, and overall quality of life.

Correlations

1. Income Change vs. Employment Status

- **Correlation Coefficient (-0.318):** A weak but statistically significant negative relationship ($p < 0.01$) suggests that those who reported employment status improvements were less likely to report substantial income changes. This may imply that while employment status improved, income changes were not necessarily proportional or immediate.

2. Income Change vs. Quality-of-Life Impact

- **Correlation Coefficient (0.483):** A moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.01$) indicates that increases in income are associated with better perceptions of overall quality of life improvements.

3. Employment Status vs. Quality-of-Life Impact

- **Correlation Coefficient (-0.525):** A moderate, negative, and significant relationship ($p < 0.01$) suggests that participants who did not improve their employment status rated the overall impact on quality of life more favourably. This could indicate that other factors beyond employment (such as personal development or social benefits) contributed to improved quality of life perceptions.

Key Implications

1. Income and Quality of Life: The positive correlation between income increases and quality of life stresses the importance of income-generating components in community-based adult education programmes for promoting sustainable livelihoods.

2. Employment Disparity: The weak negative relationship between employment improvements and income suggests that job improvements may not always translate to immediate income gains. This may indicate the need for additional support in career advancement or entrepreneurship.

3. Non-Income Benefits: The inverse relationship between employment improvements and quality of life ratings suggests that participants may derive other benefits (e.g., self-confidence, skills, or social support) from the programmes, highlighting their multifaceted impact.

The analysis demonstrates that community-based adult education programmes positively impact participants' livelihoods, primarily through improved quality of life and moderate-income changes. However, employment status improvements do not always correspond to income growth, suggesting potential gaps in economic opportunities. To enhance livelihood outcomes, programme designs should integrate both employment-focused and holistic support strategies.

Discussion of Research Findings

Participation rates, barriers to engagement, impacts on livelihoods, and effects on social capital were the primary focus of this investigation into the role of community-based adult education in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Nigeria. The results are in line with and build on previous research in a number of important areas.

1. Participation in Adult Education in the Community

The study found that participants participated in a variety of adult education programmes, with moderately high correlations between sustained participation and perceived relevance to their livelihoods. This underscores the importance of continuous engagement in educational initiatives to achieve meaningful livelihood improvements.

Similar studies highlight adult education's transformative potential. For instance, research by Tawiah et al (2023) found that adult and community education significantly empowered rural women in South Africa, enhancing their economic independence and social standing. Participants are often given the ability to pursue a variety of economic opportunities as a result of the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, which facilitates this empowerment.

2. Barriers to Participation

Participants identified multiple barriers to accessing adult education, including financial constraints, time limitations, and limited availability of programmes. The lack of a significant relationship between the type of barriers and their perceived impact suggests that these challenges are pervasive and multifaceted.

This finding is consistent with studies emphasising the need for holistic approaches to address participation barriers. According to a study on barriers to adult education, adult learners frequently encounter financial constraints, lack of time, and limited program availability.

3. Impact on Existence

The research indicated that participation in adult education programmes positively influenced livelihoods, with notable improvements in income levels and quality of life. However, changes in employment status did not always directly correlate with increases in income, indicating that education provides benefits beyond just getting a job. This observation aligns with findings from Odede K. (2024), who emphasised that empowering women through education leads to broader community benefits, including improved health outcomes and economic development. Education gives people a wide range of skills, making them more able to adapt to different economic situations and stay strong.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of community-based adult education in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Africa, exploring participation trends, barriers to engagement, livelihood impacts, and social capital enhancement. Key findings indicated that sustained participation in adult education programmes correlates positively with perceived improvements in livelihood relevance, income, and overall quality of life. However, barriers such as financial and time constraints limit participation, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

In addition, even though participation increased community involvement, the relationship between social capital and community involvement was more complicated, indicating that individuals may form new social networks as they become more involved in their communities. This finding emphasises the dual role of education as a vehicle for both economic and social empowerment.

These insights align with existing literature on the transformative potential of community-based adult education, reinforcing the idea that education not only benefits individuals but also has far-reaching implications for community development and economic resilience.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the study emphasize the following:

1. It is crucial for governments, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions to implement strategies that alleviate obstacles such as financial constraints and time limitations. Suggested measures include providing financial subsidies, scholarships, flexible learning schedules, and childcare services to support adult learners. Also, expanding the availability and accessibility of CBAE programs, particularly in rural and underserved areas, is vital. This could involve exploring mobile education units or digital learning platforms to reach a broader audience and enhance educational opportunities.
2. Fostering a culture of lifelong learning is essential for sustaining the benefits of adult education. This can be achieved through follow-up workshops, advanced training programs, and the establishment of community support groups that encourage continuous skill enhancement. Building social networks and support systems within community-based programs is also recommended, as it promotes social cohesion through collaboration, networking events, and peer mentorship, ultimately enhancing individual well-being and community resilience.
3. Regular evaluation and monitoring of program outcomes are necessary to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. By utilizing data collection and feedback mechanisms, stakeholders can identify new challenges and adapt curricula to better meet learners' needs, thereby maximizing the potential of CBAE to empower individuals and strengthen communities across Africa, contributing to sustainable livelihoods and social cohesion.

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