

# Influence of Literacy Programmes on the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal “5” among Women in Rural Communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area

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**Abstract:** *The study examines the influence of literacy programmes on the achievement of sustainable development Goal “5” among rural women in Ikwerre Local Government Area. Three research questions were answered with three null hypotheses that were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study. The study adopted the descriptive research survey design. The target population of the study consist of all the 401,328 adult women in Ikwerre Local Government Area. A sample of 400 women (Beneficiaries = 200, Non-beneficiaries = 200) were determine through Taro Yamen formula and selected through purposive sampling technique. The instrument for the data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire designed in the pattern of 4-point rating scale of agreement. The instrument was face and content validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was established for the study using Cronbach Alpha. Research questions were answered using Mean and Standard Deviation statistics. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test. The result of the study showed that literacy programmes have influenced the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended among others that women organizations should support rural women to participate more in reading, writing and numeracy which will make do businesses on their thereby reducing perpetual subordination.*

**Keywords:** *Literacy Programme, Gender Equality, Rural Communities, Sustainable Development Goal and Impact.*

## Introduction

In African societies, education of women over time has generated lots of arguments. Some people argued that the place of women is in the kitchen, so it is a waste spending time and resources to educate them. Others suggested that since she will ultimately be married out, it is unreasonable to invest in her education. Women are to be given only such training in domestic activities that would enhance their being good wives and mothers (Oroka 2016). In the face of scarce resources, many parents believed that educating a male child is preferable and more beneficial to educating a female. This is because most African family systems are patrilineal; having their generations recorded and headed through males (Suara, 2013). These opinions have negatively impaired the education of women and the girl-child. In recent times, women and the girl-child education has attracted not only local or national attention but also international attention because of the large population of the female folk and their role in nation-building.

Accelerated development in the third world countries hitherto, was geared towards capital accumulation. In recent years however, development whether urban or rural, is hinged on human capacity building. Consequently, improvement in the quality of people as productive agents is the major concern of development policies. As observed by Onyeozu (2017a), emphasis is now placed on policies needed to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and disease and to provide more diversified employment opportunities, thus reducing income inequalities. Palm in Onyeozu (2017b) defined development as a continuous process of positive change in the quality and span of life of a person or group of persons. Onyeozu further stressed that development should be perceived as a multi-dimensional process which involve the re-organization and reorientation of the entire social, economic and cultural systems of a definite locality or society. The society consist of men and women of diverse aspirations and views.

Women are recognized the world over as very important element in the development process. Oyebamiji and Adekola (2018) claimed that it is not just because of the number of the womenfolk but the social and economic assignments which they carry out in their societies. In spite of the importance of education to women's contribution to development, available statistics showed that women lag behind men in all areas of education, science and technology, thereby hampering their participation and contribution not just in community but national development. This is corroborated by National Bureau of Statistics (2012) reports on employment rate of 68.72% for men as against 31.28% for women in Nigeria. The indispensable role of women in the developmental effort of the society calls for their empowerment at all levels. Today, in most of the developed and developing countries in the world and Nigeria inclusive, women are being relegated such that they are discriminated and segregated from participating in some public functions in areas of policy formulation and programme development.

The 2022 World Bank Development Indicators figure indicates that female constituted 49.46 % of the entire population. Many of them are illiterate, poor, disadvantaged politically, socially and culturally. The implication of the above features for women in Nigeria is that they are bound to be backward compared to their male counterparts. For women to break these barriers they need access to power over economic, social, psychological and cultural situations to enable them have knowledge to transform the world to their advantage. Knowledge gained, if put into profitable use, help in liberating people from the shackle of hunger, poverty and other vices that hinders one's proper existence. In an effort to attain liberation for womenfolk; Tawo, Arikpo and Ephraim (2016) advocated for gender equality through empowering women as a way of boosting their capacity to make choices and to transform the choices made into desired actions and outcomes. Achieving the contribution of women towards growth is done by making opportunities available to both sexes through avocation of gender equality and women empowerment.

Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefiting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their home, community and society. Gender equity is one means of achieving gender equality. Gender equality in education would imply that girls and boys are ensured and actually offered the same chances and treatment in access, process and outcome of an education of good quality, and which is free from any stereotypes including empowerment. This implies that gender equality is a tool that can be used in the achievement of sustainable development since both sexes (men and women) has equal chances of contribution towards economic, social, political and cultural development of the society.

Sustainable Development (SD) according to the Brundtland Commission report as cited in Schaefer and Crane (2015) is the development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This implies that sustainable development is a core concept within global development policy and agenda. It provides mechanism through which society can interact with the environment without risking or causing any damage to the resource for the future. Thus, it is a development paradigm as well as concept that calls for improving living standards without endangering the earth's ecosystems or causing environmental challenges such as deforestation and water and air pollution that can result in problems such as climate change and extinction of species (Browning & Rigolon, 2019).

Similarly, sustainable development is an approach to development which uses resources in a way that allows them (the resources) to continue to exist for others (Mohieldin, 2017). It is the process of organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. Based on this, sustainable development aims at achieving social progress, environmental equilibrium and economic growth. Exploring the demands of sustainable development, Ukaga, Maser and Reichenbach (2011) emphasized the need to move away from harmful socio-economic activities and rather engage in activities with positive environmental, economic and social impacts. Sustainable development describes improvement and changes that aim to achieve a more sustainable situation; and sustainability focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Deebom & Oshebor, 2021). This awareness process on sustainability of the resources can be achieved through literacy programme especially among the rural women.

Literacy education refers to learning undertaken by or provided for men and women outside the formal school system. In other words, it conveys the description of learning activities which adults engage in to further their knowledge, skills and experiences. As revealed by Seya (2014), the aims of literacy education is to transmit the general process of technical or vocational skills, knowledge, values and attitudes for self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of the societies. Hence, it occurs out of the formal education system with a view to remedy educational inadequacies of some women in the society for empowerment.

Women literacy empowerment programmes are important to all societies because they are mothers who are the first educators to children, who will grow up to be future leaders of any country. Okpoko (2010) supported this view by contending that education of women is critical to development, and make them valuable assets to their families, communities, nation and the entire world. Implicitly, literacy education spurs critical thinking among women towards proper decision making in her environment and the society at large. Also, through literacy education, women are equipped with skills for economic, political and social development. In support of this, Anyanwu, Omolewa and Sidique in Okpoko (2010) affirm that without literacy, the society cannot acquire the useful information required for stability and pleasure in their environment.

Through literacy education, women are trained to become active in political, economic and social life and they are able to increase their levels of awareness for enhanced ability to lay claim on their rights. This implies that literacy education leads to improvement in the social well-being of women through decreased fertility rates and lowering of infant mortality rates. Apart from reduction in mortality rate, there is an argument that literacy education also impact on the social wellbeing of women hence closes gender gaps, inequality, generation of equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender (King & Hill, 2014). Literacy education programme is believed to be a

potential tool by which women capacity development can be enhanced for attainment of sustainable livelihoods in the society. Unfortunately, majority of Nigerian women scattered both in the rural and urban communities continue to suffer dearth of development and empowerment programmes for lack of literacy education.

Consequently, it has become obvious that there is a relationship between literacy programmes and women education, therefore, if sustainable development goal “5” (gender equality) must be achieved, there is need to explore literacy programmes that can educate and equip women with the necessary skills and knowledge required of them to contribute to socio-economic development in the communities. In pursuant of the above, this study is designed to examine the impact of literacy programmes on the achievement of sustainable development goal “5” (gender equality and women empowerment) among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to National Bureau of Statistics (2021), Nigeria has an approximate population of 206.14 million comprising of 101.67 million for women and 104.47 million for men. This numerical strength has not been translated to equal treatment in the society. With regard to political participation, women have been grossly underrepresented, even as they constitute about 50 percent of Nigerian population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Under-representation of Nigerian women in educational, economic and political programmes could lead to a serious setback in development and, thus, the need for gender equality and women empowerment. In achieving this equality, many programmes have been put in place at local, state, national and international levels with the aim of discouraging gender imbalance including the Millenniums Development Goals (MDGs) that metamorphose to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These programmes and initiatives aim at widening women’s access to education, encouraging women’s full participation in cash economy and politics and reviewing laws on status of women. These programmes were introduced with the aim of empowering the women, and engender equity between male and female, but it was observed that many changes have not been achieved. It then agitates the mind on what next should be done to achieve this objective, especially in rural communities? Could literacy programme if vigorously implemented bring the desired changed? The answer to this question prompted a study of this nature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of literacy programmes on the achievement of sustainable development goal “5” among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the influence of:

1. Basic literacy programmes on the achievement of sustainable development goal “5” among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.
2. functional literacy programmes on the achievement of sustainable development goal “5” among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.
3. digital literacy programmes on the achievement of sustainable development goal “5” among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered to guide the study.

1. What is the influence of basic literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area?
2. What is the influence of functional literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area?

3. What is the influence of digital literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries on the influence of basic literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries on the influence of functional literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries on the influence of digital literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive research survey design and was carried out in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The target population of the study consist of all the adult women in Ikwerre Local Government Area. As at the time of this study, the total number of adult women in Ikwerre Local Government Area was estimated at 401,328 (Source: National Population Commission, 2023). A sample of 400 women were determine using Taro Yamen sample determination method. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 200 women who are beneficiaries and 200 women who are not beneficiaries of literacy programmes. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Literacy Programmes on the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Questionnaire" (LPASDGQ). The instrument was designed in the pattern of 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha method for a measure of internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 was established for the instrument. Out of 400 copies distributed (Beneficiaries = 200 and Non-beneficiaries = 200), only 307 copies (Beneficiaries = 171 and Non-beneficiaries = 136) were completely filled and successfully retrieved and used for the analysis. This gives 88 percent retrieval. Research question were analysed using mean and standard deviation statistics while the null hypothesis formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test.

## Result

The result of the study was presented as follows.

**Research Question 1:** What is the influence of basic literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area?

**Table 1: Mean Responses on Basic Literacy Programme on the Achievement of Gender Equality Among Women in Rural Communities**

S/N	Basic Literacy Programme on Gender Equality Achievement	Beneficiaries			Non-Beneficiaries		
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	RMK	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	RMK
1.	Acquiring the skills of reading enables women to run their own businesses rather than depending solely on men that made them perpetually subordinate.	3.97	0.53	SA	3.26	0.70	A
2.	Literate women are more likely to be given leadership positions which empower and give them voice in defense of their rights.	3.14	0.60	A	3.87	0.64	SA
3	Women who can write can access information on their rights as human beings thereby reduce the gap of inequality.	3.10	0.69	A	2.54	0.80	A
4.	Literate women are able to make contributions that protect the rights and course of women in the community.	3.77	0.86	SA	3.61	0.83	SA
5.	Literate women are more likely to be incorporated into decision making process as it concerns their well-being as women.	3.60	0.74	SA	3.80	0.60	SA
6	Women who can read and write can access information that can promote gender equality such as women owning properties in their father's house.	3.55	0.86	SA	2.98	0.66	A
7.	Literate women are able to take on paid employment to earn a living rather than depending solely on men.	3.41	1.01	A	3.71	0.70	SA
<b>Average Mean/SD</b>		<b>3.51</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>A</b>

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result; 2022*

Table 1 shows the influence of basic literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The respondents who were beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of basic literacy programme agree that the programme have influenced on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. This was in the average mean response of 3.51 and 3.40 which is higher than the cut-off points of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale.

**Research Question 2:** What is the influence of functional literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area?

**Table 2: Mean Responses on Functional Literacy Programme on the Achievement of Gender Equality Among Women in Rural Communities**

S/N	Functional Literacy Programme on Gender Equality Achievement	Beneficiaries			Non-Beneficiaries		
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	RMK	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	RMK
8.	It has empowered women to lead more independent lives, as they no longer rely solely on men.	3.04	0.96	A	3.92	0.59	SA
9.	It has enabled rural women to pursue a higher qualification thereby bridging the gap of gender disparity in many professions.	3.41	1.01	A	3.94	0.69	SA
10.	It exposes women to venture into different means of livelihood that could enhances their financial stability thereby bridging the gap that favours gender inequality.	3.61	0.70	SA	3.57	0.87	SA
11.	Functional literacy has enabled women gain employment to sponsor families without relegating family responsibility to men alone that encourages gender inequality.	3.11	0.80	A	3.93	0.75	SA
12.	It enhances women participation in children training which makes men feel superior to them.	3.64	0.74	SA	3.17	0.74	A
13.	Functional literacy has enabled women to contest for election and breaking the notion that political offices are for men.	3.50	0.76	SA	3.79	1.02	SA
14.	It has empowered women to undertake jobs that were exclusive reserve for men thereby eliminating gender disparity.	3.83	0.57	SA	3.94	0.94	SA
<b>Average Mean/SD</b>		<b>3.45</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>SA</b>

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result; 2022*

Table 2 shows the influence of functional literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The respondents who were beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of functional literacy programme agree that the programme have influenced on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. This was in the average mean response of 3.45 and 3.75 which is higher than the cut-off points of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale.

**Research Question 3:** What is the influence of digital literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area?

**Table 3: Mean Responses on Digital Literacy Programme on the Achievement of Gender Equality Among Women in Rural Communities**

S/N	Digital Literacy Programme on Gender Equality Achievement	Beneficiaries			Non-Beneficiaries		
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	RMK	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	RMK

15.	It creates a new opportunity to empower women to improve entrepreneurship opportunities using ICT thereby making independent.	3.07	0.77	A	3.76	0.66	SA
16.	Women can easily approach the job with confidence because IT women have employment options as flexibility and work at home concept.	2.97	0.63	A	3.70	1.01	SA
17.	Rural women now know how to read text messages and no longer depend on husbands for interpretation of mobile messages.	3.73	0.60	SA	3.51	0.80	SA
18.	It makes rural women to use digital payment modes efficiently without getting cheated by any sort of fraudulence which reduces depending on others for financial transactions.	3.16	1.01	A	3.60	0.58	SA
19.	Digital literacy grant women's access to digital economy that was mainly operated by men thereby reduces gender gaps.	3.62	0.87	SA	3.11	1.03	A
<b>Average Mean/SD</b>		<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>SA</b>

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result; 2022*

Table 3 shows the influence of digital literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The respondents who were beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of digital literacy programme agree that the programme have influenced on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. This was in the average mean response of 3.31 and 3.54 which is higher than the cut-off points of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale.

### **Test of Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries on the influence of basic literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.



**Table 4: z-Test Analysis on the Influence of Basic Literacy Programmes on the Achievement of Gender Equality among Women in Rural Communities**

S/N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	zcal	zcrit	Remark
Beneficiaries	3.51	0.76	171	305	0.05	1.31	1.96	Accepted
Non-beneficiaries	3.40	0.70	136					

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result; 2022* Accept Ho if  $zcal \leq zcrit$ , Otherwise Reject Ho.

Since the calculated value of z (zcal = 1.31) is less than the critical value of z (zcrit = 1.96) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of basic literacy programmes on its influence on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

**Hypothesis 5:** There is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries on the influence of functional literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

**Table 5: z-Test Analysis on the Influence of Functional Literacy Programmes on the Achievement of Gender Equality among Women in Rural Communities**

S/N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	zcal	zcrit	Remark
Beneficiaries	3.45	0.79	171	305	0.05	-3.27	1.96	Accepted
Non-beneficiaries	3.75	0.80	136					

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result; 2022* Accept Ho if  $zcal \leq zcrit$ , Otherwise Reject Ho.

Since the calculated value of z (zcal = -3.27) is less than the critical value of z (zcrit = 1.96) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of functional literacy programmes on its influence on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries on the influence of digital literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

**Table 6: z-Test Analysis on the Influence of Digital Literacy Programmes on the Achievement of Gender Equality among Women in Rural Communities**

S/N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	zcal	zcrit	Remark
Beneficiaries	3.31	0.78	171	305	0.05	-2.50	1.96	Accepted
Non-beneficiaries	3.54	0.82	136					

**Source:** *Researcher's Field Result; 2022* Accept Ho if  $zcal \leq zcrit$ , Otherwise Reject Ho.

Since the calculated value of z (zcal = -2.50) is less than the critical value of z (zcrit = 1.96) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant

difference in the mean response of female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of digital literacy programmes on its influence on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Result from Table 1 revealed the influence of basic literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The study found that basic literacy programmes help women who can read and write can access information on their rights as human beings thereby reduce the gap of inequality, acquiring the skills of reading, writing and numeracy enables women run their own businesses rather than depending solely on men that made them perpetually subordinate among others. The finding of this study agrees with King and Hill (2014) who found that apart from reduction in mortality rate among women, basic literacy education also influence on the social wellbeing of women hence closes gender gaps, inequality, generation of equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender.

Result from Table 2 revealed the influence of functional literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The study found that functional literacy programmes have empowered women to lead more independent lives, as they no longer rely solely on men, enabled rural women to pursue a higher qualification thereby bridging the gap of gender disparity in many professions. This finding agrees with Freire (2015) that functional literacy education build confidence in individual (rural women) and equipped them to be self-reliant, create awareness of the living conditions of learners and therefore should lead to solving common problems facing learners.

Result from Table 3 revealed the influence of digital literacy programmes on the achievement of gender equality among women in rural communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The study found that digital literacy programmes enabled rural women to use mobile phone that have make them to live independently and that rural women can now use the phone to communicate business that serves as a source of livelihood for themselves and family. This finding corroborates with Rajahonka and Kaija (2019) who asserted that digitization creates a new opportunity to empower women to improve entrepreneurship opportunities using ICT and also strengthening rural women to participate into the digitization processes for community development.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the finding it was concluded that literacy programmes have influenced on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal “5” among rural women in Ikwerre Local Government Area. These programmes as revealed in the study are basic literacy programmes, functional literacy, and digital literacy programmes. This is drawn from the finding which showed literacy programmes have positively influenced on the achievement of sustainable development goal “5” (gender equality) among rural women in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the finding of the study, the follow recommendation was made.

1. Women organizations should support rural women to participate more in reading, writing and numeracy which will make do businesses on their thereby reducing perpetual subordination.
2. Rivers State government should give educational grants to rural women to enhance their chances of pursuing higher education thereby reducing gender inequality.

3. More online and offline jobs should be provided to women so that they grow stronger economically.

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