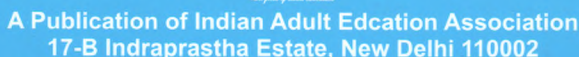


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Reading Habit and Gender as Predictors of Adult Learners' Performance in English Language in Literacy Centers in Oyo State, Nigeria

• Akinyooye, Funmilola Elizabeth¹

• Popoola Damilola Iyanuoluwa²

Abstract

Reading is an effort to understand the writer's message for development on a personal level and professional achievement. As a result, psychologists view it as a complex cognitive process where meanings are constructed from texts. The current study was carried out in literacy centres in Oyo State, Nigeria, to ascertain the associations between adult learners' academic accomplishment in English language, gender, and reading habits. A descriptive survey design was used in the study. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to choose 120 participants from literacy centers located in the city of Ibadan. Data were gathered using the Reading Habits Questionnaire (RHQ) and the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the responses. The empirical findings indicated that reading habit ($\beta = -0.097$; $t = -0.277$; $p \ 0.783 > 0.05$) and gender ($\beta = -0.526$; $t = -1.577$; $p \ 0.119 > 0.05$) have negative and insignificant relationship with adult learners' academic performance. The results also indicated reading habit and gender jointly accounted for 0.04% of the total variance in the dependent variable (adult learners' performance in the English language) among adult learners in literacy centers in Oyo State. Lastly, the findings revealed that age significantly influences adult learners' performance in the English language ($F_{3,17} = 2.46$; $P < 0.05$). It is implied that adult educators should design these kinds of projects and assignments with reflective thinking in mind, taking into account the importance of reading habits for academic success. In addition, facilitators could collaborate to develop schedules for library instruction to help adult learners develop a reading habit.

Keywords: *Oyo State, literacy centres, adult learners, reading habits, academic performance, gender.*

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Introduction

Reading comprehension and its potential to enrich information are two reasons why knowledge received via reading is essential to the cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal growth of learners (Baffoe & Okae-Anti, 2020; Hassan et al., 2021). There are several reasons why people read, including expanding their knowledge, having fun, unwinding, and so on (Whitten, Labby, and Sullivan, 2016). However, Mirza et al., (2021) pointed out that reading is more than just a means of enjoyment when it comes to living an active life. Chotitham and Wongwanich (2014) maintain that reading fosters the development of critical and judgmental thinking skills, which are necessary for problem-solving through context-taking. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) measured the importance of reading for success, noting that it begins in school and persists throughout a person's lifespan. However, Nigeria has a comparatively low literacy rate, particularly for adults. The National Bureau of Statistics reports that the adult literacy rate in Nigeria is roughly 59.6%, with a gender disparity that significantly favours men. This disparity poses a serious obstacle to Nigeria's attempts to meet its development objectives. One of the less literate states in Nigeria is Oyo State, where initiatives to raise adult literacy rates have been going on for a while. The state's poor literacy rate persists despite these efforts, especially among women. Establishing literacy centers, where adult learners can gain basic reading skills and improve their academic performance, is one of the measures used by the government and non-governmental groups to raise literacy levels. Many aspects that are essential for fostering adult learners' reading skills have been documented in the literature.

According to Costa and Kallick (2019), students who read a lot benefit from developing thinking, valuing, flexibility, and creativity skills. It has been found that reading habits affect students' ability to retain knowledge, construct worldviews, and write and communicate in English. Regretfully, reading habits are waning overall, most likely due to advancements in new media technology, most notably social media. Wang and Ho (2019) propose that an individual's inability to excel academically is often accompanied by a subconscious sense of contentment stemming from a deficiency of exposure to pertinent reading materials, educational chances, and resources. Poverty, conventional beliefs, and a lack of reading materials all negatively affect how readers form their habits. According to research by Ramirez et al., (2019), a severe lack of reading resources posed a significant obstacle to extended reading. Poor reading habits lead to poor academic accomplishment.

Academic success was found to be connected with reading preferences. Learners who consistently read both academic and non-academic books develop

their critical thinking skills, conceptual knowledge, and language fluency, all of which enhance their academic performance (Baba & Affendi, 2020). According to Muhammad et al., (2020), reading is a complicated act that involves a variety of cognitive, physical, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic processes. Research indicates that students who read extensively typically achieve high levels of academic success. However, adult learners' performance can be influenced by age and gender as well.

Age is thought to be one of the independent factors that could potentially have an impact on adult learners' academic performance. For students to function well, they must have the cognitive growth and maturity that come with age. Many developmental changes typically fluctuate with an individual's age. Every aspect of human functioning is likewise impacted. As a result, it is now required to investigate how much age influences adult English language learners' academic achievement.

Gender is another element taken into account in this research. Gender refers to the distinction between male and female sex and the ways in which this attribute influences people's attitudes about life and academic pursuits. There is conflicting evidence regarding how gender influences students' academic achievement. This has made it necessary to determine whether adult learners who are male and female differ significantly in terms of their academic achievement in English language.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between adult learners' academic performance in the English language and the factors of reading habit, gender, and age. The researcher believes that when the variables are considered collectively, a deeper comprehension of the relationship will be extremely beneficial in creating a theory that is more effective and in providing adult learners in Nigeria with useful counseling techniques, the ultimate goal of which is to improve their academic performance in English language.

Statement of the problem

Understanding gender and reading habits impact on adult learners' English language proficiency is lacking, despite their importance being acknowledged in language learning. Though it's widely accepted that reading regularly improves language skills, there is still disagreement on how gender influences language use. To further understand their predictive value and possible ramifications for language education initiatives, research on the relationship between reading habits, gender, and adult learners' English performance is necessary. There is a knowledge vacuum about the precise effects of gender and reading habits on adult learners' English

language proficiency. Even though reading is typically seen as a good habit for language learning, it's crucial to investigate how reading affects adult learners' performance in the English language in their unique situation.

Furthermore, further research is required to fully understand how gender influences language performance predictions. Effective language education programmes must take into account the connections between gender, reading habits, and language proficiency. The factors that predict adult learners' performance in English can be used to inform curriculum design, instructional practices, and interventions that are intended to improve adult learners' language proficiency. Examining the influence of gender and reading habit on the language proficiency of adult learners has practical ramifications for language instruction.

Objectives of the study

The study's broad objective is to explore reading habit and gender as predictors of adult learners' academic performance in English language in literacy centers in Oyo State, while specific objectives are to:

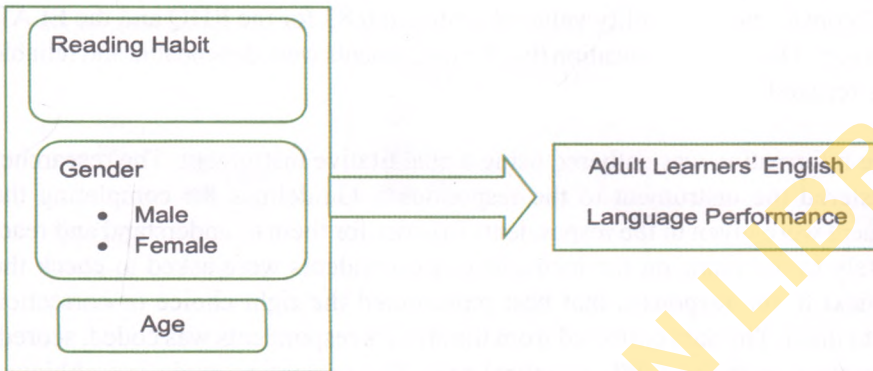
- i. examine the relative contribution of reading habit and gender on adult learners' performance in English language in literacy centers in Oyo State;
- ii. investigate the composite contribution of reading habit and gender on adult learners' performance in English language in literacy centers in Oyo State; and
- iii. evaluate the influence of age on reading habits of adult learners in English language in literacy centers in Oyo State.

Research questions

The questions below are raised to guide the study.

- i. What is the relative contribution of reading habit and gender on adult learners' performance in English language in literacy centers in Oyo State?
- ii. What is the joint contribution of reading habit and gender on adult learners' performance in English language in literacy centers in Oyo State?
- iii. Does age significantly influence the reading habits of adult learners in English language in literacy centers in Oyo State?

Conceptual framework



Methodology

The descriptive survey research design method was used in the study. This design is appropriate and relevant to this research activity because it is commonly regarded as one in which an ensemble of people or items is investigated by collecting and analysing data from just a few individuals or objects that are thought to be representative of the group as a whole (Nworgu, 2006). However, in certain surveys, everybody in the population is researched, as opposed to sample surveys, which, just a subset of the overall population, is studied and used in this study. Furthermore, the design is applicable for this research endeavor because the investigator used the collected data to characterise the existing situations.

The population of interest for this study consisted of all adult learners enrolling into adult literacy centres in Ibadan metropolis as in 2023. However, one-hundred and twenty (120) respondents were sampled using purposive sampling technique. They were adult learners who had enrolled and stayed for more than a year in the literacy centres under investigation.

The quantitative research instruments designed by the researcher were used to obtain information from the respondents. The instruments consisted of Reading Habits Questionnaire (RHQ), and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT), respectively. These instruments were validated by the expert in the field of Educational Measurement and Evaluation. To aid ease of interpretation, the items were given in simple English and were rationally and systematically structured.

The instruments were subjected to reliability test and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient technique and Kuder and Richardson Formula 20 (KR20) which produced internal consistency reliability value of 0.86 and 0.83 for the RHQ and the ELAT, respectively. This was an indication that the instruments were dependable and reliable for this research.

The information was gathered using a quantitative instrument. The researcher administered the instrument to the respondents. Guidelines for completing the instrument were given to the respondents in order for them to understand and react accurately to the items on the instrument. Respondents were asked to check the boxes next to the responses that best represented the right choice or correction option to them. The data collected from the study's respondents was coded, scored, and examined with the SPSS statistical tool. The regression analysis techniques were employed.

Results

Results based on remographic characteristic of the respondents.

Figure 1: A pie-chart showing distribution of respondents by gender.

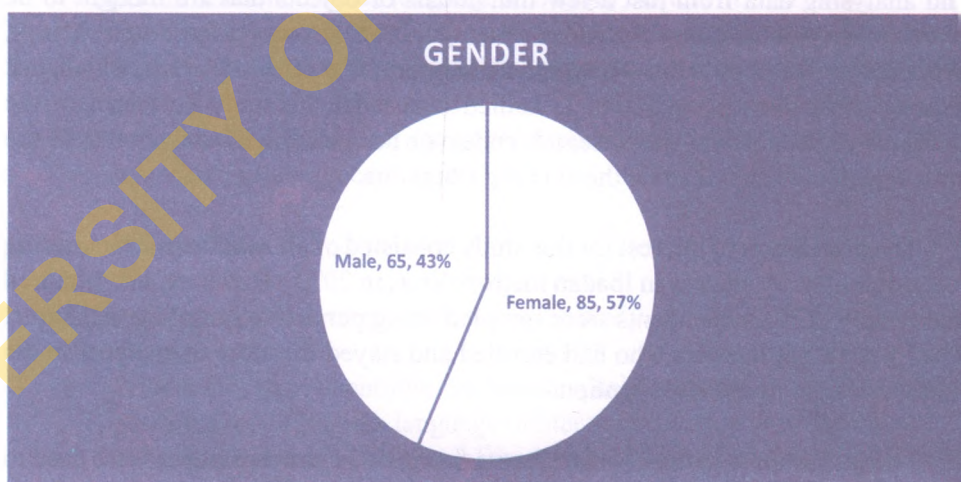


Figure 1, which is a pie chart, expressed in percentage, indicated that 85 (57%) of the sampled respondents were females, while the remaining 65 (43%) were males. This indicates that female respondents had the highest representations.

Figure 2: Bar-Chart Showing the Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

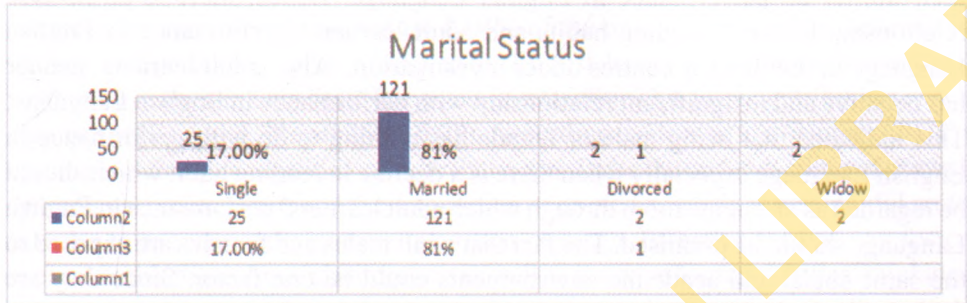


Figure 2, is a bar chart while the numbering: 0, 50, 100, 150 are the markings on the vertical axis depicting the number of people who are either married, single, divorced or widowed as their marital status. Numbers 25, 121, 2 and 2 are the actual numbers representing the four different categories of marital status mentioned above. It is expressed in both percentage and frequency for the participants. The results indicated that twenty-five (25) of the respondents, which represented 17.0% of the total participants, are single. Going by their marital status, one hundred and twenty-one (121) of them, which represented 81%, were married, while two of the participants, which accounted for 1%, were widows. It can be deduced that the majority of the participants involved in the study were married, accounting for 81% of the entire respondents used in the research.

Results based on research questions

Research Question I: What is the relative contribution of reading habit and gender on adult learners performance in English language in literacy centres in Oyo State?

Table 1: Regression analysis outcomes, as in Research Question above

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	99.830	12.336		8.092	.000
Reading Habit	-.097	.352	-.032	-.277	.783
Gender	-.526	4.139	-.181	-1.577	.119

a. Dependent Variable: English Language Achievement Scores

Table 1 showed that reading habit ($\hat{\alpha} = -0.097$; $t = -0.277$; $p\ 0.783 > 0.05$) and gender ($\hat{\alpha} = -0.526$; $t = -1.577$; $p\ 0.119 > 0.05$). The empirical outcomes indicated that a unit decline in adults learners' reading habit brings about 0.097 reduction in their ability on performance in English Language. Hence, there is an inverse relationship between reading habits and adult learners' performance in English Language in the literacy centres under investigation. Also, adult learners' gender has negative and insignificant relationship with performance in English Language. This indicated that being male or female has nothing to do with performance in English Language especially when there is a decline in reading habit which should be regarded as an engine room through which adult learners' performance in English Language should be premised. The fact that adult males and females are exposed to the same social and academic environments could be one factor. Since they are evaluated according to the same standards, they respond to grades (academic achievement) in a comparable way. This result is consistent with Ugoji's (2008) observation that there is no discernible gender difference. The findings were supported by Silverrajoo and Hassan (2018), who acknowledged that there is a weak and negative correlation between learners' reading strategies and academic achievement. A negative correlation between reading habits and anxiety was observed by Tonka and Bakir (2020). So, they came to the conclusion that students' performance and reading habits are influenced by their reading anxiety. According to similar findings, study habits and academic stress, reading habits, and academic accomplishment were found to be significantly negatively correlated (Alnahdi & Aftab, 2020). In contrary, Abid, Aslam, Alghamdi and Kumar (2023) found that reading habits and academic achievement in English had a moderately good association, while there was a large positive relationship between reading habits and study skills.

Research Question II: What is the joint contribution of Reading Habit and Gender on Adult learners Performance in English language in Literacy Centres in Oyo State?

Table 2: Regression analysis outcomes in respect of Research Question II, as above.

Model	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	750.446	2	375.223	1.340	.268 ^b
Residual	20719.684	74	279.996		
Total	21470.130	76			

$R = 0.187^a$ $R^2 = 0.035$ $Adj\ R^2 = 0.009$

- a. Dependent Variable: Achievement Scores
b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Reading Habit

Table 2 showed that there is no joint contribution of independent variables (reading habit and gender) to the dependent variable (adult learners' performance in English language in Literacy Centres in Oyo State) ($R = 0.187$). This led to the fact that the independent variables accounted for 0.04% of the total variance in the dependent variable (adult learners' performance in the English language) among adult learners in literacy centres in Oyo State (adjusted $R^2 = 0.009$). This joint contribution is not significant ($F_{(2, 74)} = 1.34$; $p\ 0.268 > 0.05$). According to Hoover and Tunmer (2020), reading is a complex cognitive activity that necessitates the understanding of printed symbols as thinking units and the recognition of printed symbols as meaningful units in order to appropriately interpret a written message. Effective reading can foster success in the classroom and workplace as well as improve learners' critical thinking, writing, and communication abilities as well as their intuitive knowledge—all of which are crucial for the development of human capital (Heineke & Vera, 2022).

Research Question III: Does age significantly influence the reading habits of adult learners in English language in Literacy Centres in Oyo State?

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Variance showing the influence of Research Question III, as above.

Age	N	Mean	Std.D	F	Df	Sig.	Remark
Under 18yrs	3	30.00	5.196				
18- 26yrs	23	30.65	4.830				
27- 35yrs	8	30.25	8.277				
36- 44yrs	7	32.00	2.450				
45- 53yrs	30	28.86	4.932				
Total	77	30.49	5.486	2.464	3,71	0.041	Significant

Table 3 showed the influence of age on the reading habits of adult learners' performance in the English language in Literacy Centres in Oyo State. The table revealed that age significantly influences adult learners' performance in the English language ($F_{3,17} = 2.46$; $P < 0.05$). The age category influenced the most are those within the age range of 36–44 years, who have the highest mean score of 32.00, while the least influence can be traced to those within the age range of 45–53 years, with a mean score of 28.86. It was expected that the older people would outperform the younger ones, but the results show otherwise. Piaget's (1932) hypothesis, which holds that an adolescent's brain is fully developed and capable of engaging in complex and abstract thought, provides a viable explanation for this. Compared to their older counterparts, younger pupils are typically more committed to their academic goals. This may be the result of the elder ones' attention being diverted by other urgent,

non-academic concerns. Although younger adult learners focus on their academic work, it's possible that they lack the expertise necessary to successfully handle the hurdles involved in advanced academic work.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study concluded that reading habit, gender and age contributed to the adult learner's performance in English language at literacy centres in Oyo State, Nigeria. Based on this, the following recommendations are suggested.

i. Adult learners should be encouraged to develop a reading culture through the implementation of programmes by literacy centres. Regular reading sessions, book groups, and having access to a wide variety of reading materials that suit students' interests and preferences can all help achieve this.

ii. Even though there were no discernible gender disparities in language proficiency, it is nevertheless critical to establish a gender-sensitive learning environment. Gender-related differences in learning outcomes and engagement should be taken into consideration by adult educators in order to provide equal learning opportunities for male and female students.

iii. Longitudinal studies should be carried out to provide a better understanding of the long-term impact of reading habits on language ability regardless of adult learners' gender and age. This research can shed light on how language and reading habits change over time, enabling more intelligent educational interventions.

iv. Adult educators are essential in influencing the language proficiency and reading habits of the adults' learners. Consequently, learner-centered language instruction and the promotion of good reading habits should be the main topics of modules in teacher preparation programmes.

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