
FUNCTIONAL LITERACY NEEDS OF MARKET WOMEN IN NSUKKA MAIN MARKET OF NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE

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ABSTRACT

The title of the paper is functional literacy needs of market women in Nsukka main market of Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Functional literacy refers to the type of literacy linked with economic, technical, vocational, occupational or job skills and acquired in the context of such skills. The purpose of the study was therefore to find out the educational needs, family management needs and social life needs of the market women. The study was a survey design. The market was divided into ten lines from which 225 women were selected out of the 446 women who are registered owners of the stalls in Nsukka main market. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire made up of 17 items structured in a five point likert type scale. The questionnaire was subjected to validation by three experts. Crombach Alpha reliability co-efficient was applied to find out the internal consistency. The reliability obtained was 0.75 which shows the appropriateness of the questionnaire. Data collected was analysed using mean scores. The findings among others show that there is need to give functional literacy to the market women in Nsukka main market. The study showed that market women in Nsukka require educational needs, family management needs and social life needs to be able to function effectively in their daily endeavours. Based on the findings, recommendations were made among others that functional literacy programmes should be organized for market women in Nsukka main market in order for them to be functionally effective in their communities and society at large.

Keywords: functional literacy, market women, educational needs, family needs, social life needs

INTRODUCTION

Functional literacy is a type of literacy linked with economic, technical, vocational, occupational or job skills and acquired in the context of such skills. In other words, functional literacy combines the skills of reading, writing and computing with social, technical and occupational training. Ani (2003) viewed functional literacy as a combination of literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy with socio-economic or work-oriented skills. Functional literacy is selective in approach. It is targeted at selected group whose needs for the skills therefore serve as incentive motivation for their acquisition of the skills. Such groups be they economic, political or social would usually be homogeneous having identical needs and learning to read to improve their functional skills. For example, functional literacy may be organized for a group of market women, roadside mechanics, panel beaters, welders, fashion designers and so on.

In the African traditional society, people take their products to market for sale. According to Anyanwu (1987), most market women are married, have children to take care of, belong to different societal and religious organizations. Combined with their different engagements, market women have to buy and sell their products, take care of their

families. All these functions require one form of functional literacy or the other for them to perform these functions effectively.

Studies showed that most market women are illiterates or semi-illiterates. Idowu (1987) observed that in Nigerian society, most women are denied the opportunity of being educated. Some of the major factors by which women are denied education include ignorance, early marriage, poverty and so on. It was observed by the researchers that majority of the market women in Nsukka main market of Enugu State are illiterates. They need some functional literacy needs to be able to function effectively in the market, community and society. It is therefore necessary to find out the functional literacy needs of market women in Nsukka main market of Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to find out the functional literacy needs of market women in Nsukka main market of Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the educational needs of Nsukka market women in business transaction;
2. determine the family management needs of Nsukka market women;
3. ascertain how the functional literacy needs help in the social life of Nsukka market women.

Research Questions

1. What are the educational needs of Nsukka market women in business transaction?
2. What are the family management needs of Nsukka market women?
3. How does the functional literacy needs help in the social life of Nsukka market women?

Method

The study is a survey design carried out in Nsukka main market known as Ogige market in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of the study was made up of all the four hundred and forty-six women (446) who are registered owners of stalls in Nsukka main market. Ogige market is divided into ten main lines and the stalls covered from A – H, N and MS. The lines are represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Market Women Lines in Ogige market

S/NO	NO OF WOMEN	NO OF WOMEN SELECTED
A	55	28
B	50	25
C	25	13
D	80	40
E	60	30
F	35	18
G	60	30
H	40	20
N	20	10
MS	21	11
TOTAL	446	225

Source: Nsukka Market Traders Association

In selecting the market women, simple random sampling technique was used to select 225 market women. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured in simple English language to adjust to the academic levels of the respondents. The questionnaire was made up of items structured in a five point likert type scale. The response style of Strongly Agree(SA), Agree(A), Undecided(UND), Disagree(D) and Strongly Disagree(SD) were used. The questionnaire was subjected to validation by three experts in Department of Adult Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Crombach Alpha reliability co-efficient was applied to find out the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The co-efficient or the reliability obtained was 0.75 which was high enough to indicate the appropriateness of the questionnaire. The questionnaire copies were administered to the respondents by five research assistants. The research assistants were tutored on how to handle the questionnaire and the respondents. The questionnaire was analyzed through the use of frequency tables and mean scores. A mean of 2.5 and above was regarded as accepted otherwise rejected. Out of the 230 copies of questionnaire given out, five copies were wrongly completed hence; only 225 copies were analyzed for the study.

Results

Table 2: Educational needs of the respondents

S/N	Item	SA	A	UND	DA	SD	Total Response	Mean Score	Remarks
1.	To keep record of transactions	130	60	20	10	5	225	4.30	Accepted
2.	To write names of customers	90	50	20	30	35	225	3.57	Accepted
3.	To use invoices	45	30	15	110	25	225	2.82	Accepted
4.	To open bank account	45	40	16	60	64	225	2.74	Accepted
5.	To sign my name	50	35	18	50	72	225	2.50	Accepted
6.	To give correct changes to customers	24	38	34	60	69	225	2.50	Accepted
7.	To count money at the end of the day	29	41	29	46	80	225	2.52	Accepted

Table 2 shows the responses on the educational needs of the respondents. The results of the analysis of the data collected shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 had mean scores above 2.5. meaning that they were found to be useful and effective for the functional literacy needs of the market women.

Table 3: Family Management Needs

S/N	Item	SA	A	UND	DA	SD	Total Response	Mean Score	Remarks
8.	To keep their children healthy	80	70	45	20	10	225	3.84	Accepted
9.	To learn about family planning	40	40	80	60	5	225	3.22	Accepted
10	To understand modern method of preserving food	30	40	50	52	53	225	2.74	Accepted
11.	To cook more nutritious meals	40	45	20	50	70	225	2.26	Rejected
12.	To help their children with homework	25	20	150	30	-	225	3.17	Accepted

Table 3 shows the responses towards family management needs. The results of the analysis show that item 11 was rejected because it had mean score less than 2.5. On the other hand, items 8, 9, 10 and 12 were found to be effective for the functional literacy needs of the market women.

Table 4: Social Life Needs

S/N O	Item	SA	A	UN D	D A	S D	Total Respon se	Mean Score	Remar ks
13.	To be a secretary of a meeting/organization	90	80	25	20	10	225	3.97	Accepted
14.	To be able to listen to news over the radio	75	50	30	40	30	225	3.44	Accepted
15.	Learn how to vote	68	40	37	36	44	225	3.23	Accepted
16.	To be able to read sign posts when traveling	57	34	39	28	67	225	2.67	Accepted
17.	To read newspapers in order to know what is happening	49	32	36	65	43	225	2.67	Accepted

Table 4 indicates the social functions required by Nsukka market women to function effectively. The results of the analysis of the data collected showed that items 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 were all accepted by the respondents. This shows that they were found to be useful for the social life of the market women.

DISCUSSION

From the data analysis, it was found out that the market women need education in their businesses in order to keep proper records of their business transactions, speak English to customers and to write names of customers who buy on credit. This finding agrees with the view of Combs (1985) who asserts that education of women unlocks the entrance of all other elements on which socio-economic transformation depends. This finding also corroborates with Adebola (1997) who stated that education plays a vital role in women's business dealings. Ugwoegbu (2003) observed that functional literacy makes an individual to be mentally equipped and develop communication powers as well as technical and vocational capacities.

The findings of the study revealed that the market women like most other women care so much about childbearing and health care. This statement is testified in Table 3 which revealed that majority of the women need functional literacy to care for their children's health and family planning. The study also showed that majority of the market women need education in order to become secretary of their meetings and women organizations. They also need functional literacy to count the contribution and be able to listen to news over the radio.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Nsukka Local Government Council should open Adult Education Centre around the Nsukka main market to encourage the women's participation.
2. The Adult Education unit of Nsukka Local Government Education Department should liaise with the department of adult education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka to provide a primer for the market women.
3. While planning an educational programme for any target group, need assessment and studies of this nature must be carried out by the agency concerned in order to address the needs and aspirations of such group.

CONCLUSION

The study had looked at functional literacy needs of market women in Nsukka main market of Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Market women carry out many responsibilities in their daily lives. They therefore need functional literacy when dealing with their customers in the market, when carrying out their marital obligations and wherever they have social functions. Functional literacy will help them to function effectively in their communities and society.

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