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# Contribution of Some Identified Variables to Females' Participation in Literacy Programme in Southwestern Nigeria

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## Abstract

Women seem to be fewer in social and political activities in Nigeria; this could be a function of literacy level which seems to be lower among females than it is among their male counterparts. The purpose of this study therefore, was to investigate the contribution of some identified variables that could determine females' participation in literacy programme for their overall development. Women in the Southwest Nigeria were the target population, four out of six states in Southwestern Nigeria were selected for the study and 2,400 females in basic literacy class were selected out of 6,535 learners through a simple random sampling procedure. Data were collected using "Literacy Assessment Scale (LAS)" (Adepoju, 2001) ;(  $r=0.72$ ). The results showed that each of the seven identified variables: age, marital status, occupation, number of children per family, cultural demands, socio-economic status and locality ( $t=2.8$ , significance of 0.005,  $p<0.05$ ;  $t=2.3$  significance of 0.02,  $p<0.05$ ;  $t=-0.08$ , significance of 0.93,  $p>0.05$ ;  $t=-4.5$ ,significance of 0.00,  $p<0.05$ ;  $t=4.36$ , significance 0.00,  $p<0.05$ ;  $t=48.0$  significance of 0.00,  $p<0.05$ ;  $t=6.0$  significance of 0.00,  $p<0.05$ ) contributed differentially and that occupation, one of the variables, did not contribute significantly. Socio-economic status with: ( $\beta=0.705$ ,  $t=48.0$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) was the most important of all the variables. It was concluded that some factors would motivate females to participate in literacy programmes, it was therefore recommended that these identified variables(age, marital status, occupation, number of children per family, cultural demands, socio-economic status and locality) should be taken into consideration by planners and other stake holders when planning literacy programmes for females in any given community so that the target population might be able to participate maximally in the programmes to enhance the much needed development for the females and the community. **Key words:** Literacy, Females, Participation.

Literacy is the ability to read and write in any language with understanding (Huebler, 2008). Literacy is like a life wire and a means of survival for people socially, and economically; it is the window through which we see the world around us and thereby get informed and participate in the world. Therefore, an illiterate person is a disadvantaged person because he or she cannot participate in the civilized world of work or the world where decisions are made.

Akinpelu (2002) explains that literacy is much more profound than mere literacization, or imparting or learning the mechanical art of reading, writing and numeracy; he opines that these technical skills should be set within the objective of liberating the illiterate from the shackles of oppression, which are social and political.

International organizations all over the world recognize the importance of women to the overall development of communities. Thus, a lot of attention is focused on the development of women through literacy programmes. Scholars (Akinpelu, 2002; Obayan, 2003; Murzi, 2003;

Aderinoye, 2004; Stronquist, 2005) have written on the need to give females the needed impetus to empower and upgrade them socio-economically and politically.

## *Women, Poverty and Illiteracy*

Illiteracy and poverty cause and reinforce each other. To eradicate or reduce poverty to the lowest level, literacy education should be employed and girls and women should be encouraged and motivated to take the advantage.

The traditional sex division of roles in the family and the society excludes most girls from going to school. Various forms of patriarchal and economic oppression subordinate women, according to the history and culture of each country and region. Lack of access to school accounts for most adult illiteracy(Obayan, 2003; Indabawa, 2004).

Poverty has a gender bias; according to UNDP (2000), a large proportion of poor households are headed by women, especially, in rural Africa and the urban slums of Latin

America. Female members of a poor household are often worse off than the male members, due to gender-based differences in the distribution of food and other entitlements within the family. Patriarchy order of the society seems to lead to some of women's miseries. Many women are poor because they are disadvantaged in relation to their male family members in the satisfaction of their basic needs and in their access to independent means for satisfying these needs; they are less educated and have less access to remunerative activities (World Bank Report, 2002).

### ***Literacy and Women Development in Nigeria***

Socio-cultural factors that stem from patriarchal norms impinge strongly on the lives of women, and these make women's status remain very low. Although, most Nigerian women are active outside the home, particularly in agriculture and in income-generating activities in the informal sector, they are yet to compete on equal basis with men in the labour market because a good number of them are perhaps illiterates. Adekanye (2004), referring to the survey conducted by the Agency for International Development in seven developing countries which include Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho and Nigeria shows that women, rather than men, are mostly responsible for the health, nutrition and education of their family. Females are the ones that perform the main tasks that keep the home going. They are capable of stimulating changes in behaviour that would lead to marked savings in food, water and energy consumption; hence, their education is very important so as to enhance their role and active participation in environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources (UN Habitat, 2003). Given some literacy education along with skills, their burdens will be lessened and they will get out of backwardness.

Women perform more duties than the traditional dichotomy of production of goods and services in or outside the home and the rearing of children. Many women being illiterates, further prevents their full participation in social, economic and political lives of the nation. Osita-Oleribe (2007), observes that the girl-child education which is the panacea for poverty and family disorganization as well as societal true development has suffered several setbacks over the years. These are due to socio-cultural and economic factors, as girls contribute the largest population of illiterate children worldwide. These illiterate girls will grow up to become illiterate women.

Females who are subordinated because of social, religious and cultural practices would not readily have the push to go into literacy programme. More so, the patriarchal dominance in the society inhibits their participation at all levels and in all spheres of the development process, even in education which is the pillar of development. Though, females are vital to national development, as a result of the negative attitude of the society about them, they appear to be the forgotten fifty percent of the world's population, the neglected human resources for development or the forgotten factor in economic development. In spite of all these, more households headed by men are poor as compared to those headed by women, 70% of male-headed households are poor whereas, 50% of households headed by women are poor (UNESCO, 2003).

This study was designed to address the following questions:

- What are the selected personal characteristics of the learners?
- What are the factors associated with women's participation in literacy programme?
- What are the constraints to women's participation in literacy programme?
- What are the things to put in place to enhance maximum participation of women in literacy programme?

The main objective of this study is to determine the variables that are responsible for women's participation in literacy programme.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design to find out the interrelationships of the variables and to have easy and unambiguous collection of information from the respondents.

The target population was made up of all females who missed schooling or early school dropouts in all the six states of Southwestern Nigeria.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. The random sampling was used to select four out of the six states that make up Southwestern Nigeria. The stratified technique was used to stratify each of the four states into three zones, based on the existing senatorial districts. From each of these senatorial districts, one Local Government Area which had more females in basic literacy programme than males was purposefully selected to participate in the study. From each of the participating

Local Government Areas, 200 females who were attending basic literacy education classes were randomly selected to participate in the study. In all, the sample was made up of 2,400 respondents selected from a population of 6,535, representing 37% of the population who are adult literacy education participants. Table 1 shows how this was derived.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to the States

The states	Population	Sample size (37%)
Ogun state	1,245	600
Ondo state	1,924	600
Osun state	1,946	600
Oyo state	1,420	600
Total	6,535	2,400

Sources: Adult and Non-Formal Education offices in four states. (2008/2009 Female Basic Literacy Learners)

### Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was the Literacy Participation Scale (LPS), this was a modified version of Adepoju(2001) Literacy Assesment Scale(LAS). The instrument was divided into 2 sections. Section ‘A’ elicited information on the demographic characteristics of the respondent such as age, marital status, occupation, and so on while section ‘B’ contained items drawn on a 4-point scale on a weighted value of 1-4 to determine respondents’ participation in literacy programme.

The participant being in basic literacy class were able to comprehend the questionnaire as the researcher, the assistants and participants’ facilitators read all the sections of the questionnaire to them, to which they gave their candid responses.

At the end of the exercise, 2,300 copies of the instrument were retrieved from the 2,400 copies that were administered. This represented 95.83% which therefore, showed a higher measure of the instrument collection from the literacy education participants.

Fig 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

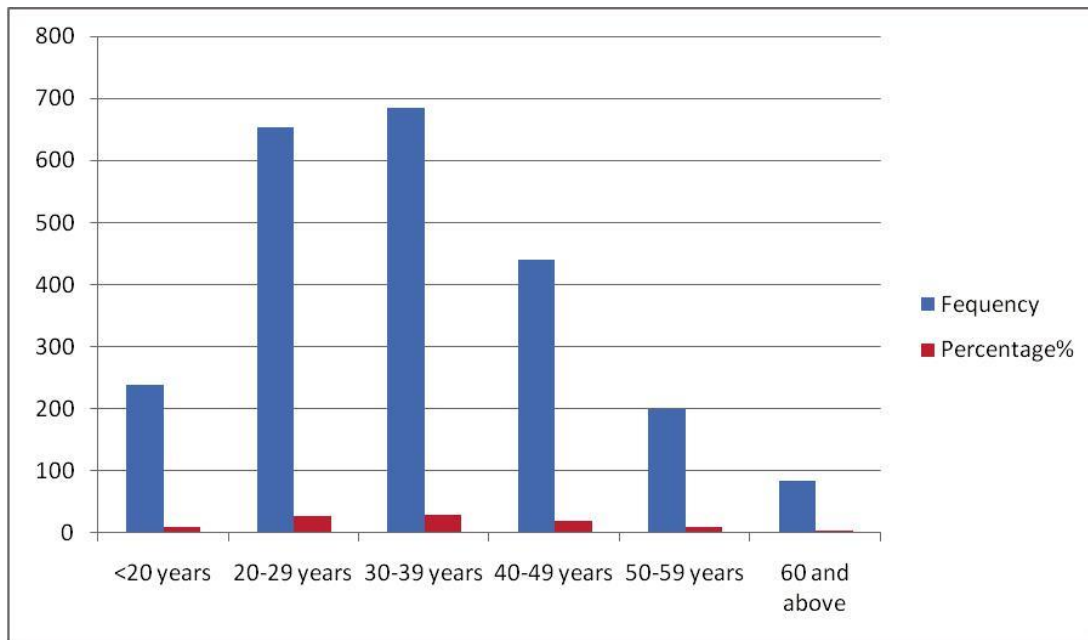


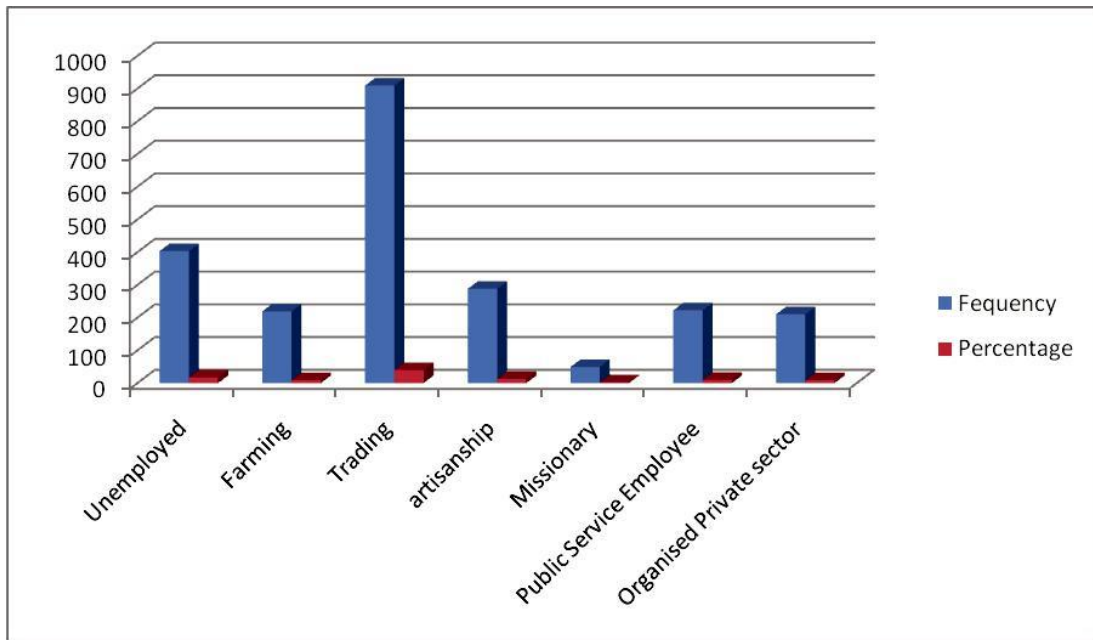
Table 2: Showing Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	675	29
Married	1,463	64
Divorced	86	4
Separated	76	3
Total	2,300	100.0

Table 3: Showing the Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Religious Beliefs

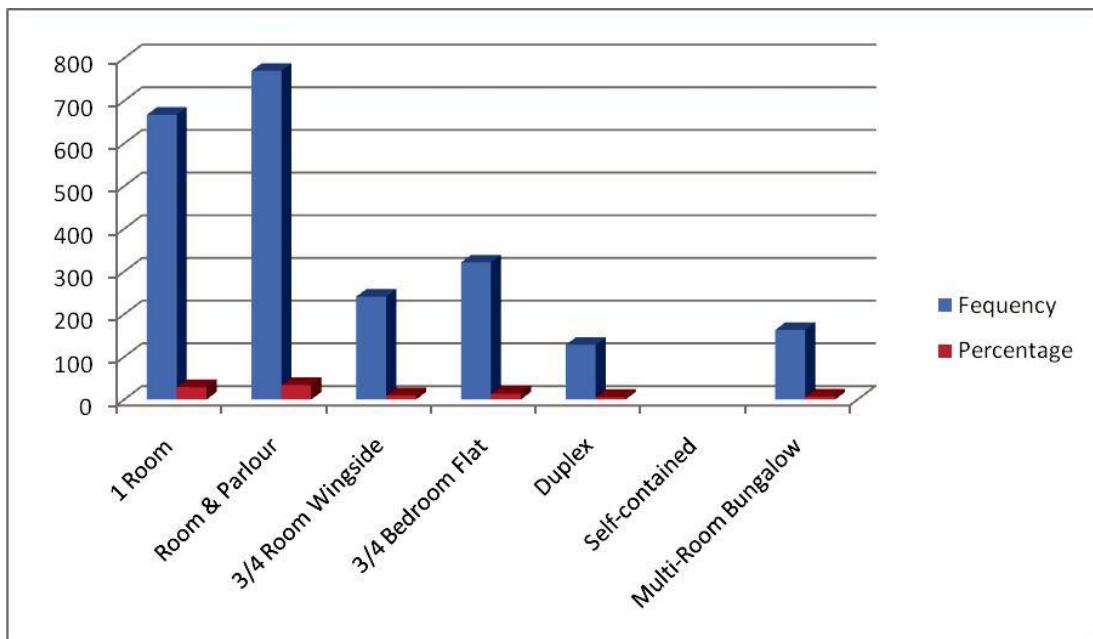
Religious Belief	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	1,339	58.2
Islam	812	35.3
Traditional Religion	117	5.1
Others	32	1.4
Total	2,300	100.0

Fig 2: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation



Social Status of Respondents

Fig 3: Distribution of Respondents According to Residential Apartment



## Results

Table 4: Parameter of Estimate of the Relative Contribution of Each of the Identified Variables to Females' Participation in Literacy Programmes.

Variables	Unstandardized co-efficient		Standard co-efficient	T	Significance
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
(Constants)	7.151	.258		27.716	.000
Age	.114	.040	.048	2.816	.005
Marital Status	.169	.072	.037	2.332	.020
Occupation	-1.139E-03	.014	.001	-.082	.935
Number of Children per family	-.213	.047	-.080	-4.563	.000
Cultural Demands	.408	.093	.062	4.365	.000
Socio-Economic Status	1.003	.021	.705	48.050	.000
Locality	.546	.090	.089	6.093	.000

Dependant Variable: Participation in adult literacy

## Discussion of Findings

The above table shows the standardized regression weight (B), the standard error of estimate, the t-ratio and the level at which the t-ratio is significant for each of the identified variables.

The extent to which each of the seven identified variables contribute to females' participation in literacy programme and value of the t-ratio associated with each variable as shown on Table 4 indicate that these variables: Socio-economic status, Locality, Cultural Demands, Age, marital status and Number of children per family significantly affect females' participation in literacy programme. Occupation is the only variable that does not significantly affect females' participation in literacy programme ( $t = -0.08$ ,  $p > 0.05$ )

Occupation in this study refers to the type of trade, occupation or employment the women are engaged in. Religion has become a form of culture de facto. The religion people practice determine their ways of life, belief and how they comport themselves in the society. Generally, women who live in societies where the male is seen as superior to the female tend to be low socio-economically because the male is preferred socially and the female hardly own anything economically.

Locality in this study refers to the area where the people live; it could be urban, semi-urban, urban ghetto or rural area.

All the variables are continuous as the respondents are skill engaged in their occupation, religion and the other variables.

The findings of this study show that socio-economic status, locality, cultural demands, age, marital status and number of children per family play important roles in determining females' participation in literacy programme. Women who participate in literacy programme are better in every area of their lives. The improvement in female education is associated with a rise in her status. This agrees with the point raised by Egunyomi (1997), that there is significant achievement in the greater participation of women at all levels of socio-economic lives in different countries. This result supports the view of Mwiria (2005) that learning to read, write and calculate makes women self-reliant, able to make decisions concerning their own lives, take better care of themselves and their families, protect the environment and natural resources, support their children's education and get better jobs. Education enhances women development in all spheres of life.

## Conclusion

Age plays important role in determining females' participation in literacy programme as younger women of 20 years to 39 years outnumber the older ones of 40 years to 60 years and above. Traders outnumber other groups in literacy class; this could be because they want to be better at



their trade, improve their economy, productivity and greater efficiency in their work. Also, married women outnumber the single, divorced and separated women. Christians and Muslims outnumber other participants of different faith in literacy programme, this could stem out of the need to be better in their religious activities which also entail reading. Socio-economic status is the major determinant of females' participation in literacy programme.

## Recommendations

The felt-needs of the women must be found out and addressed so that they would be able to participate in literacy programme.

Literacy programme planners must take into account the identified variables when planning literacy programme for women in any society.

The three tiers of government; federal, state and local government should address those issues that inhibit maximum participation of women in literacy programme so as to enhance greater productivity in all areas of women endeavours.

Adequate incentives should be provided to enhance women participation in literacy programme.

Women should be encouraged to participate in literacy programme by the use of appropriate campaign methods by the government and adult education agencies.

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