

MEDIA LITERACY AND ITS EFFECT ON ADULT LEARNERS SOCIAL PROTECTION IN RIVERS STATE: POST EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19

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Abstract

The study examines the effect of media literacy on the social protection of adult learners in Rivers State using the experience of Covid-19. To achieve this objective, three research questions and three null hypotheses were raised. The non-equivalent control type of quasi experimental research design was adopted in the study. The sample size of 180 learners was drawn from the population of 2,378 adult learners from six public adult literacy centres using the convenience sampling technique. The researchers_ developed learners Social Protection Test (LeSPT) was the data collecting instrument, which was further validated by three experts. The reliability coefficient value of 0.87 was obtained using the kuder- Richardson (K-R20). Data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation and analysis of covariance. Findings show that learners exposed to media literacy had higher social protection positive effect than basic literacy. In addition, cooperative learning style adopted gained higher social protection mean score than individualized. However, on interaction effect, basic literacy had more social protection positive effect than media literacy. Based on these findings, it was recommended that awareness on the relevance of media literacy be intensified in informal system of education among others.

Keywords: Adult, Learners, Literacy, Coronavirus

Introduction

With the declaration of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a pandemic on March 12, 2020, by the World Health Organization (WHO), many countries were found to institute large-scale closure or national closures of public gatherings such as schools, churches, and mosques, markets among others. This sanction by many governments of the world was seen as a measure towards reducing the transmission rate among its citizens. More pathetic were the developing nations owing to their poor knowledge of the use of technology. In addition, the majority of the adult learners who had enrolled on basic literacy programme to acquire basic literacy skills needed to maintain average living standard in society appear to have grossly been affected. This is owing to the abrupt disruption of their learning process. This is believed to have restrained their level of comprehension and application of literacy skills to their daily activities. Thus, the acquisition of these skills presupposes that literacy skills are indispensable for the 21st century.

Studies attest that with the acquisition of literacy skills, the individual is believed to function in various aspects of human endeavours (Narayana & Ahamad, 2017; Bosma & Kelley, 2019; Olori et al., 2019). Interestingly, most of these studies focused on economic empowerment and health development of learners. However, as to how literacy skills could be applied during pandemics such as the COVID-19 era to improve the dwindling economic activities of the people, literature has not provided sufficient empirical evidence. The present study attempts to add to existing literature on the use of such skills by adult learners.

While literacy assumes different forms, its definition has gone beyond the narrow conventional meaning of the acquisition of skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic to identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world (UNESCO, 2019). This explains the emergence of one of such literacies, referred to as media literacy. Media literacy is traditionally perceived as the acceptance, analysis, composition, evaluation, and reformation of the various contents or knowledge taken from the media related to audiovisual media (Potter, 2013). The continuous improvement in the acquisition of media literacy skills is germane in both formal and informal settings (Ciurel, 2016) and among various categories of individuals (Area, 2012; Fedorov et al., 2016).

Media literacy skills involve the effective use of media in accessing and making informed choices about media content, understanding media content creation, analysing media techniques and messages, using media to communicate. Avoid harmful media content and services, and using media for democratic rights and civic purposes (Bachmair & Bazalgette), 2007). It constitutes a range of cognitive, technical and social skills, knowledge, and confidence to make informed choices about the content and information on a daily basis by individuals through interaction, contributions, and participation in the media environments. Thus, media literacy is centred on specific knowledge and skills that promote critical understanding and usage of the media (McCannon, 2009; Martens, 2010). Critical understanding is relevant not only to the reception of messages, but also to producing meaning (Kellner & Share, 2005) and learning to

create one's messages. It involves distinguishing information from propaganda, deconstructing media communication and interacting with social media mindfully (Area & Pessoa, 2012).

Evidently, the philosophy associated with media literacy is closely linked with improvement in the quality of life, citizenship rights, social integration, and social acceptance of the people (Koltay, 2016; Livingstone et al., 2012; Palsa & Ruokamo, 2015). However, most studies on media literacy tend to focus on children and adolescents (Rich & Baron, 2001; O'Rourke & Miller, 2022), health (Ngwu & Ivi-Ngwu, 2020; Olumide et al., 2022), cognitive development of teenagers (Folarin et al., 2022), civic engagement of youths (Oba, 2016), resilience to fake news by older adults (Moore & Hancock, 2022), and critical media health literacy skills (Squires et al., 2023). Although the majority of the studies were conducted in developed countries where the efficacy of media literacy is known through empirical evidence. However, literature has yet to establish the effect of media literacy on the social protection of learners in adult literacy centres, especially with the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study tends to add to existing literature on this gap and in an informal setting.

Social protection encapsulates a set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life course with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups (Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation, SPIAC, 2019). It is purported to reduce the vulnerability of low-income households with regard to consumption and access to essential services. In Nigeria, social protection is imperative for the reduction of poverty and the protection of vulnerable groups from shocks arising from social insecurity and vulnerabilities caused by disabilities, accidents, and disasters (Nigeria, 2016). Thus, the deplorable condition of adult learners in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic establishes their social protection.

Furthermore, the acquisition of media literacy by these learners is necessitated by the fact that they are regarded as one of the groups with low status, receiving limited resources (Kawamorita et al., 2020). It is also believed that media literacy knowledge is likely to unlock learners' business opportunities even in the midst of pandemics in Rivers State. However, how these skills could be acquired requires the application of suitable learning styles by the learners (Neroni et al., 2019).

Learning styles involve the composition of cognitive, affective and psychological elements that reveal how an individual interacts and gives feedback on the learning environment (Duff, 2000). They are approaches by which the learners apply to effectively and efficiently comprehend a given task or complete other tasks. This presupposes that the appropriate use of learning styles is likely to affect learners' comprehension levels. Research shows that the discrepancy in learning styles between lecturers and their students can influence academic achievements (Esa et al., 2009). Hence, the need for relevant learning styles in media literacy. The present study tends to restrain the styles to individualized and cooperative learning styles. Individualized are also referred to as lone learners, have autonomy of time, choice of what to learn, how to learn, and where to learn with the large depositories of information and data around them (Sood & Sarin, 2021). The style suits adult learners who see themselves as independent and self-directed, having control over their own learning (Malone, 2014). However, while the

learning style is relevant to the study owing to the cognitive development of learners, learners' inability to access, analyse, evaluate or communicate media information to a large extent depends on the understanding of the contents. This suggests the integration of a more holistic learning style.

Cooperative learning is an alternative way of teaching to promote social interaction among students (Ning, 2011; Gomleksiz, 2007). It involves the instructional use of several groups working together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Some advantages of the use of cooperative learning styles are that students can learn quickly with their peers, participate in the learning process through teamwork, and build self-confidence through the interdependent learning method. Students can learn any skill easily since they can interact with their peers and decrease the stress of learning new skills (Cornelius-Ukpepi et al., 2016). Empirical evidence attests that it is the best option for all students with diverse abilities and backgrounds (Nelson et al., 1993; Yu, 1995) and more positive student outcomes in academic achievement, social behaviour and effective development. The use of a cooperative learning style was also reported to have led to positive attitudes (Suhendan & Bengu, 2014; Ning & Hornby, 2010), supported and motivated learners to positive behaviours while reducing negative behaviours (Alabekee & Samuel, 2015). The essence of cooperative learning is to jointly acquire knowledge and skills at the individual level based on gaining cooperation and experience of students. To solve educational tasks using information exchange, questioning, method stimulation, and awareness of the responsibility for learning outcomes not only by students themselves but also by their group mates (Volkova et al., 2020).

Admittedly, a body of literature exists on the positive effect of learning styles. Yet, there appears to be a knowledge gap on how individualized and cooperative learning styles as moderating variables could facilitate the realization of social protection of learners. Taking into cognisance the experience of Covid-19 in an informal setting. This study, therefore, sets to determine the effect of media literacy on the social protection of adult learners in adult literacy centres in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of media literacy on social protection of adult learners in Rivers State with post Covid-19 experience. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the social protection mean scores of adult learners taught using media literacy and basic literacy.
2. ascertain the influence of learning styles on social protection of adult learners.
3. determine the interaction effect of training programmes (media and basic literacy programmes) and learning styles on social protection of adult learners.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions

1. What is the social protection mean scores of adult learners taught using media literacy and basic literacy?
2. What is the influence of learning styles on social protection of adult learners?

3. What is the interaction effect of the training programmes and learning styles on social protection of adult learners?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance guided the study

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the social protection mean scores of adult learners taught using media and basic literacy.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the social protection mean scores of adult learners taught using cooperative and individualized learning styles.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the social protection mean scores of adult learners on the interaction effect of training programmes and learning styles.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design using the non-equivalent control group type. The choice of this design is because it allows the researchers to manipulate the assignment to the treatment condition. Furthermore, of the two groups involved in the study, the experimental was exposed to treatment, while the control, which was not. The choice of non-equivalent is premised on the fact that the groups were not randomly assigned. The design is denoted by

Experimental Group $O_1 \times O_2$

Control Group $O_1 \dots O_2$

where O_1 – Pre-tests

x – Treatment for group 1

O_2 – Post tests.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in public adult literacy centres in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was a sample size of 2, 378 adult learners from six public adult literacy centres.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study was 180 learners, drawn from two centres using the convenience sampling technique. This technique involves drawing representative data through selecting units based on availability or easy access (Lavrakas, 2008). Out of this sample, 90 learners each were assigned to control and experimental group. The control group was exposed to basic literacy training using both learning styles and traditional teaching method, while the experimental group referred to as the treatment was exposed to media literacy, with both learning styles and personalized instruction methods. The assumption in the use of these methods is that whereas traditional method is predicated on the fact that adult learners could learn at their pace

having been provided with information on social protection for individual_s growth. The personalized encourages the integration of blended learning and the promotion of team work.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was the Learners_ Social Protection Test (LeSPT) structured by the researchers. The LeSPT contained 10 items of multiple choice objectives with options A, B, C and D with only one option as the correct answer. The instrument was developed from the five components of social protection enacted by Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation, SPIAC, 2019. These include labour markets, social insurance, social assistance or safety nets, micro and area based approaches, and child protection. From each component emerged two items, resulting to the total of 10.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The LeSPT was subjected to face and content validity by three experts. Two were from the Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies, while one was from Measurement and Evaluation unit of Science Education., all from the university of Nigeria Nsukka. The Kuder-Richardson (K-R20) was to obtain the reliability coefficient value of 0.87. The choice in the use of Kuder- Richardson (K-R20) is premised on the fact that it is more appropriate for test items with varying level of difficulties.

Method of Data Analysis

The analysis of data was done using mean, standard deviation and analysis of covariance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the social protection mean scores of adult learners taught using media literacy and basic literacy?

Table 1: Pre-test and post-test social protection mean scores of learners taught using media and basic literacy

Groups	n	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Difference
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
Experimental (Media)	90	25.89	3.88	34.00	5.14	8.11
Control (Basic)	90	23.11	3.09	28.63	3.28	5.52

Table 1 shows that learners taught using media literacy had pre-test and post test social protection mean scores of 25.89 and 34.00, with a mean difference of 8.11. On the contrary, learners trained using basic literacy had pre-test social protection mean score of 23.11 and 28.63 for post-test, with a mean difference of 5.52. In view of this result, adult learners taught using media literacy were found to have social protection higher mean scores than those taught using basic literacy.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of learning styles on social protection of adult learners?

Table 2: Pre-test and post-test social protection mean scores of learners on cooperative and individualized learning styles

individualized Groups	n	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Difference
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
Experimental (Media)	90	24.78	4.08	33.29	5.32	8.51
Control (Basic)	90	24.22	3.14	29.34	3.94	5.12

Table 2 shows that learners who adopted cooperative learning style had social protection mean scores of 24.78 for pre-test and 33.29 for post test, while the mean difference was 8.51. On the other hand, learners with individualized learning style had pre-test social protection mean score of 24.22 and post-test as 29.34, while the mean difference was 5.12. Based on this result, learners who adopted cooperative learning style were found to have higher social protection mean score than those with individualized learning style.

Research Question 3: What is the interaction effect of the training programmes and learning styles on social protection of adult learners?

Table 3: Mean interaction effect of training programmes and learning styles on social protection of learners

Treatment	Learning styles	n	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Gain	Mean difference
			\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD		
Experimental	Cooperative	69	25.45	4.10	34.03	5.76	8.58	2.00
	Individualized	21	27.33	2.60	33.91	2.21	6.58	
Control	Cooperative	21	22.57	3.17	30.86	2.29	8.29	3.61
	Individualized	69	23.28	3.06	27.96	3.24	4.68	

Table 3 shows that learners in media literacy while adopting cooperative learning style had a social protection mean score of 25.45 in the pre-test and 34.03 in the post-test, resulting to an adjusted mean of 8.58. On the other hand, learners with individualized learning style had the mean score of 27.33 in the pre-test and 33.91 in the post-test, leading to the adjusted mean of 6.58. Similarly, learners in basic literacy who adopted a cooperative learning style had a mean score of 22.57 in the pre-test, 30.86 in post test and 8.29 as adjusted mean. In adopting the individualized learning style, the learners had the mean score of 23.28 in pre-test and 27.96 in the post-test, while the adjusted mean, was given as 4.68. The result further shows that the mean difference in the experimental was 2.00, while the control was 3.61. Consequently, the result shows that basic literacy had more positive effect on social protection of learners than media literacy.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the social protection mean scores of adult learners taught using media and basic literacy.

Table 4: t-test comparison of the pre-test and post-test social protection of learner in media and basic literacy

Group	n	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Df	t _{value}	p _{value}	Decision
Media (pre-test)	90	25.89	3.88				
Basic (pre-test)	90	23.11	3.09	178	-5.32	.00	S
Media (post-test)	90	34.00	5.14				
Basic (post-test)	90	28.63	3.28	178	-8.35	.00	S

s – significant, significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows that at the pre-test stage, media literacy (experimental group) was significantly different from basic literacy (control group) on social protection ($t = -5.32$; $p = .00$). Furthermore, at the post-test stage, the result shows that both programmes were significantly different with the rejection of the null hypothesis.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the social protection mean scores of adult learners using cooperative and individualized learning styles.

Table 5: t-test comparison of the pre-test and post-test social protection mean scores of learners using cooperative and individualized learning styles

Group	n	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Df	t _{value}	p _{value}	Decision
Media (pre-test)	90	24.78	4.08				
Basic (pre-test)	90	24.22	3.14	178	-.99	.32	NS
Media (post-test)	90	33.29	5.32				
Basic (post-test)	90	29.34	3.94	178	5.32	.00	S

ns – not significant, s – significant, significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 5 indicates that significant difference ($t = -.99$; $p = .32$) was not found at the pre-test stage between the influence of cooperative and individualized learning styles. However, at the post-test stage, significant difference ($t = 5.32$, $p = .00$) was found between both learning styles.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the social protection mean scores of adult learners on the interaction effect of training programmes and learning styles.

Table 6: Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) on the interaction effect of training programmes and learning styles on social protection

Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean scores	F	Sig	Decision
Corrected model	412.350 ^a	3	137.450	11.418	.000	
Intercept	78308.456	1	78308.456	6505.22	.000	
Programme	387.250	1	387.250	32.170	.000	
Styles	53.916	1	53.916	4.479	.036	
Programme* styles	11.211	1	11.211	.931	.336	NS
Error	2118.650	176	12.038			
Total	110576.000	180				
Corrected Total	2531.000	179				

Table 6 shows that an f-ratio of .931 had an associated p value of 0.336 at 0.05 level of significance, hence the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Discussion of Results

The study shows that learners exposed to media literacy had higher social protection mean scores than those of basic literacy. This was also established in the existence of significant difference in the hypothesis. The points to the fact that the acquisition of media literacy skills has enormous benefits for the recipients, as witnessed in several empirical studies (Rich & Baron, 2001; O'Rourke & Miller, 2022; Ngwu & Ivi-Ngwu, 2020; Olumide et al., 2022; Folarin et al., 2022; Oba, 2016; Moore & Hancock, 2022; Squires et al., 2023). These studies suggest that irrespective of location or categories of people, the proper exposure of individuals to media literacy skills is believed to have an impact on the learner. This further agrees with the assertion that it is purported to the continuous improvement of every learner (Potter, 2003). The study, therefore, advocates the inculcation of media literacy skills in the learners to further equip them with critical thinking skills needed to ameliorate the menace associated with eventual pandemics. The study acknowledges that the use of cooperative learning style as a moderating variable also contributes to higher social protection mean scores than individualized learning styles. The promotion of team spirit in the search for knowledge is further supported in the study of Squires, Peters, and Rohr (2023). However, while the pre-test establishes no significant difference between both learning styles, a diverse opinion of respondents was found in the post-test, owing to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The result invariably suggests that learners' attainment of social protection could take different learning approaches, contradicting the findings of Nelson, Gallagher, Coleman, 1993; and Yu (1995) that a cooperative learning style was the best option for all students. These studies may not have taken into cognisance the mode of learning, as adults are self-directed learners who probably adopt a learning style believed to be appropriate for acquiring any knowledge capable of promoting their growth. Thus, the use of a

cooperative learning style is expected to have positive attitudes on the learners (Suhendan & Bengu, 2014; Ning & Hornby, 2010). This study, therefore, suggests that in as much as learning styles constitute moderating variables towards social protection, care should be taken in allowing the choice of learning style by learners.

Additionally, the study reports that the interaction effect of training programmes (media literacy and basic literacy) and learning styles on the social protection of learners was positive, though higher on basic literacy. The recognition of basic literacy invariably accounts for poor knowledge of the efficacy of media literacy, especially in the use of technology (Folarin et al., 2022). It is also possible that the poor knowledge of media literacy may have inhibited its contributions (Livingstone et al., 2012; Palsa & Roukamo, 2015). The study, therefore, advocates the intensification of awareness of media literacy and its usefulness among adult learners, as well as the provision of necessary media literacy facilities capable of promoting human and societal development.

Conclusion

The study concluded that media literacy positively affects the social protection of adult learners in Rivers State. The use of a cooperative learning style as a moderating variable constitutes a veritable style towards the realization of social protection of learners, especially during pandemics. However, while basic literacy was seen as having a higher positive effect on the interaction effect of training programmes and learning styles, scholars in both developed and developing countries have acknowledged the overwhelming contributions of media literacy in various aspects.

Recommendations

In view of the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. More learning styles should be introduced as moderating variables in ascertaining the efficacy of the independent on the social protection of learners in both formal and informal settings.
2. Awareness on the relevance of media literacy should be intensified in informal system of education, owing to the rapid development of technology.
3. Adult literacy centres should be furnished with media literacy facilities to facilitate the acquisition of its skills by learners.

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