

Strengthening Adult Literacy Programs in Order to End Female Genital Mutilation to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract—This study focuses on how the strengthening adult literacy programs can help accelerate transformative strategies to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Nigeria, specifically in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. The research delved into the definition of FGM, adult literacy programs, and how to achieve ending FGM in order to attain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030. It further discussed the practice of FGM in Nigeria and emphasized the statement of the problem. Main purpose of the study was to investigate how strengthening adult literacy programs can help accelerate transformative strategies to end FGM in Nigeria and achieve SDGs in 2030. A survey research design was used to conduct the study in Nsukka L.G.A. The population was composed of 26 facilitators and adult learners in five adult learning centres in the area. The entire population was used as a sample. Structured questionnaires were employed to elicit information from the respondents. The items on the questionnaire were face-validated by three experts while the reliability of the instrument was verified using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Technique. The research questions were analysed using means and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of degree of significance using a t-test statistics. The result of the findings shows that the practices of FGM can end through strengthening adult literacy programs. Strengthening adult literacy programs is a good channel to end or stop FGM through the knowledge and skill acquired from the learning centres. The theoretical importance of the study lies in the fact that it highlights the role of adult literacy programs in accelerating transformative strategies to combat harmful cultural practices such as FGM. It further supports the importance of education and knowledge in achieving SDGs by 2030. The study addressed the question of how strengthening adult literacy programs can help accelerate transformative strategies which can end FGM in Nigeria and achieve SDGs by 2030. In conclusion, the study revealed that adult literacy is a good tool to end FGM in Nigeria. The recommendation was that (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and individuals should support the funding and establishment of adult literacy centres in communities so as to reach all illiterate parents or individuals so that they can acquire the knowledge and skill needed to understand the negative effect of FGM in the life of a girl child.

Keywords—Adult literacy, female genital mutilation, learning centres, Sustainable Development Goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

FGM is a harmful practice that has been practiced for centuries in many parts of the world. The practice is especially widespread in Africa, where about 200 million girls and women are severely affected. Everyone knows that FGM

is still performed on innocent children. This consistently undermines their rights as individuals, especially girls and women in general [6]. This violates the rights of girls and women and also causes degrading psychological effects on them. The practice of FGM violates girls' rights to good health, high status, freedom from cruelty, protection from insecurity and crimes against them [3]. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that FGM be discouraged among the population in all communities in Nigeria, as it brings no health, social and economic benefits to girls except painful and degenerative effects [1]. With the above explanation, Nigeria will then become a safe place for girls and women in the society. Indeed, Nigerians are said to have joined others around the world in taking advantage of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM as they pledged to fight against FGM. The practice of FGM in Nigeria is commonly performed on girls between 0 and 15 years old.

According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey [2], many girls aged 0-14 years have undergone FGM, while [3] indicates that about 91% were mutilated before the age of one year. Therefore, it is good to adopt accelerated strategies to end FGM in the communities. This can be achieved using prevention strategies by involving parents (youth), caregivers and decision makers from different households [4]. Reference [2] noted that 20% of all women aged 15 to 49 years old, had undergone FGM while [3] reported that 15% of women in the same age group (15-49 years old) have experienced this form with an estimated 19.9 million FGM survivors living in Nigeria [5]. Therefore, in Nigeria, for a girl to get married, she has to go through this harmful practice just to maintain an equal standard or status with other girls in the community. UNICEF continues to work with government and civil society partners, in the context of phase IV of the Joint United Nations Population Fund- UNFPA-UNICEF Program on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (UNJP), to accelerate efforts to achieve SDGs' Target 5.3 on ending harmful practices by 2030.

In Abuja, [6] highlighted that FGM is on the rise in Nigeria among girls aged 0-14. They also explained that in 2013 it increased from 16.9% to 19.2% in 2018, but by 2022 it had reached a high level. This is very worrying because according to [1], only about 19.9 million girls/women have survived this form of FGM. The practice of FGM deprives some people of access to good education, good health and other good aspirations in life [6]. This practice is not only harmful to health but also harmful to girls generally in the society. There

is therefore a need to combat these practices in communities across Nigeria, especially in areas where they are on the rise, with 30% while the northern part is less than 6%. In general, FGM is harmful to girls in every aspect [6].

As [6] stated, a renewed commitment is needed to achieve the SDGs and improve living standards by 2030. Any strategy to achieve the above declaration can be implemented through a literacy program for adults. Adult literacy programs are learning activities that adults participate in to catch up academically. This is because some of them cannot complete their studies. This may be because they have been excluded from the formal school system due to poverty, early marriage, early pregnancy, religion or cultural beliefs. Thus, adult literacy programs are programs designed to help adults learn and become literate, as well as acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be useful in life. Parents and guardians can gain the necessary educational knowledge to know the negative effects of FGM on girls. They will protect their unborn children and protect them from any unruly behaviour of other family members, but uneducated people or parents will not understand the negative effects of cutting through an innocent girl. They will see it as part of social norms that they must follow and obey [7]. Adult literacy helps adults who are out of school or unable to attend formal school to acquire the basic skills and knowledge they need in different families as well as in carrying out daily activities. This program helps children develop effective reading, writing, calculation and work skills, maintain good health, ensure a balanced diet at home, detect good and bad habits, and now have enough knowledge and means to abandon the practice of FGM at home and in their community at large. This adult learner, along with other learners from other curriculum, will help communities understand why they should end FGM against them and against girls [8].

Therefore, strengthening adult literacy programs in rural and urban areas will help accelerate transformational strategies to end FGM, to achieve SDGs three and four, focusing on how to put an end to criminal and harmful practices affecting people, gender-based violence and also ensure healthy life and promote the well-being of people of all ages, while ensuring quality education, including equitable education, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

This type of program is one that, when appropriate strategies are applied, can easily help accelerate transformational measures to end the practice of FGM in both rural and urban areas. This can be done when adult literacy centres have good conditions, good teaching materials, professional instructors and a practical, favourable learning environment for learners [7]. The apprenticeship program is also flexible and allows people to participate at their convenience. Funding the venue is no problem either and learners are truly looked after by their peer supporters. With the above qualities in an adult literacy centre, learners will attract and encourage more people to enrol in learning programs. If this continues, many people will go through FGM. Adult literacy programs and the knowledge they acquire will be good weapons to end FGM. Indeed, adults from

learning centres can collaborate within a region or community to speak out against FGM practices. When they start this in different houses and others saw that nothing happened to that person's daughter even without FGM, the child continued with her life and even when the child marries, the child will still live well without FGM, no one will like to engage in FGM practices again. They will tell the rest of the people around the learner to also participate in the learning process. This goal can be achieved when the government commits to strengthening and promoting adult literacy programs. Adult literacy programs have been neglected by the Nigerian government for many years.

Statement of the Problems

The problem is that the practice of FGM in Nigeria is actually very common, even though we are in the 21st century. This practice is increasingly harmful to the younger generation, especially young girls. These FGM practices are becoming more common because most women or parents are not well informed about the negative effects of the practice. Most parents/guardians are uneducated and all they know is to do what they encounter on the ground or what their parents have passed on to them. Most of them will tell you that it is their tradition and custom without looking at the harm this practice has caused to girls or women. Thus, with the strengthening of adult literacy programs, most of the participants will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to resist such practices at home. Adult literacy is neglected in Nigeria, even though many people are uneducated. These people will not understand or see anything wrong with what they are doing unless they participate in a learning program where everything will be exposed to them. In the current situation, they may not like to participate in the formal school system because they will have to take care of their families and fulfil their responsibilities. Therefore, the only way for adults to easily acquire such knowledge is through adult literacy programs. Therefore, the government does not focus on adult literacy programs. They have forgotten that when people's educational needs are taken care of, there will be rewards because educated parents will protect their children from all forms of crime and harm such as FGM.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to explore how strengthening adult literacy programs can help accelerate transformational strategies to end FGM in Nigeria using Nsukka LGA in Enugu State as a proxy for others.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study;

- How strengthening adult literacy programs can help in accelerating the transformative strategies in putting an end to FGM in Nsukka L.G.A of Enugu State?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

- There is no significant difference between the mean

scores of the facilitators and adult learners in the adult learning centres on how strengthening adult literacy programs can help in accelerating transformative strategies in putting an end to FGM in Nsukka L.G.A, Enugu State.

II. METHOD

Survey research design was used in conducting this research.

Population of the Study

The study was conducted in Nsukka L. G. A., Enugu State, Nigeria, with 26 facilitators and adult learners at five adult learning centres in Nsukka L. G. A. The sample included 10 facilitators and 16 adult learners making it 26 respondents. Because the population was small, the entire population of 26 respondents was used as the sample size for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection tool for the study was a questionnaire consisting of 2 parts. The first part makes it possible to obtain information about the respondent's biographical data. Part II includes question items. The instrument's response options are strongly agreed (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly prefer (SD). These answers were scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 point respectively.

Validation of Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the department of Adult and Continuing Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation Department of Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Enugu State, Nigeria.

The Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of instrument was 0.71 using Cronbach Alpha reliability. Question was answered using means and standard deviation. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant using t-test.

Method of Data Collection

Copies of the questionnaires tagged ALPTATSFQM were administrated to 10 facilitators and 16 adult learners in five adult learning centres at Nsukka L.G.A, Enugu state, Nigeria

Method of Data Analysis

Data from the research question were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested at 0.5 level of significance and appropriate degree of freedom with t-test statistic.

III. RESULTS

The result for research question is shown in Table I.

TABLE I
MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATION ON HOW ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS CAN HELP IN ACCELERATING TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES IN ENDING FGM IN NSUKKA L. G. A.

S/N	The following are the strategies adult literacy can accelerate transformative strategies in ending FGM	Facilitators			Adult Learner			Total		
		\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
1	Adult literacy programs are a good channel to end FGM	3.21	0.66	A	3.10	0.73	A	3.16	0.70	A
2	Those who are illiterates can also help to stop FGM	1.51	0.41	D	1.71	0.60	D	1.61	0.51	D
3	Elders in the community who are not educated can help to stop FGM	1.33	0.21	D	1.20	0.11	D	1.27	0.16	D
4	Adult learners can help to stop FGM through knowledge	2.98	0.86	A	3.20	0.72	A	3.09	0.76	A
5	Adult literacy program can help me to acquire knowledge and skills needed to be useful in life	3.36	0.71	A	3.18	0.91	A	3.27	0.84	A
6	Parents or guardian will acquire educated knowledge and skills they can use in their different homes without attending adult literacy program	1.60	0.10	A	1.80	0.20	A	1.70	0.14	D
7	Through adult literacy parents will know the negative effect of any practice	2.76	0.51	A	2.91	0.79	A	2.84	0.66	A
8	Guardians or parents who attend adult literacy programs will acquire the knowledge and skill about FGM and its side effect on the girl child	2.96	0.48	A	2.81	0.71	A	2.89	0.59	A
9	A participant in adult literacy program will guard their children from passing through the practise of FGM due to the knowledge they acquired	1.31	0.21	A	1.48	0.36	A	1.40	0.29	D
10	A participant of adult literacy program will also guard against the unborn child from this harmful act through the knowledge acquired	3.16	0.71	A	3.28	0.51	A	3.22	0.62	A
11	Participant can also help to protect other unborn children of other families from FGM	2.86	0.71	A	2.74	0.80	A	32.80	0.74	A
12	Uneducated person or parent can understand the negative effects of FGM on a girl child	2.00	0.50	D	2.16	0.41	D	2.08	0.46	D
13	Uneducated parents will take cutting through a female child as normal societal norms that should be followed	2.71	1.68	A	2.62	0.71	A	2.67	0.69	A
14	Knowledge from adult literacy will help a participant to maintain and practice good health	1.71	0.66	A	1.66	0.58	A	1.69	0.62	D
15	Adult literacy program will help to equip participants on how to reject this criminal and harmful act on their children	2.66	0.82	A	2.52	0.94	A	2.59	0.86	A
16	Participants in adult literacy programs will help to enlighten members of the community on the negative effect of FGM on girls	1.61	0.31	A	1.69	0.42	A	1.65	0.37	D
	Overall	2.36	0.64		2.38	0.78		2.37	0.71	

Table I shows that out of 16 items, facilitators and adult learners agreed (A) with 13 items and disagreed (D) with 3. Both (combined) mean scores showed that the respondents agreed with 13 strategies and disagreed with 3 strategies on how to accelerate transformative strategies to end FGM in

Nsukka L. G. A.

Hypothesis results were presented in Table II. Table indicates that the t-calculated value of 0.071 is less than the t-crit. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of

facilitators and adult learners on how adult literacy programs can help accelerate transformative strategies in putting an end to FGM in Nsukka.

TABLE II
T-TEST RESULT OF HOW ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM CAN HELP IN ACCELERATING TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES IN PUTTING AN END TO FGM IN NSUKKA L. G. A.

Gender	mean	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-crit	dec
Facilitators	2.36	0.64	10	25	0.071	2.485	NS
Adult learners	2.38	0.78	16				

NS = not significant.

IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULT

The result in Table I shows that both facilitators and adult learners accept that there are 13 strategies that can be used to accelerate the transformative ways of putting an end to FGM in Nsukka L. G. A. of Enugu State, Nigeria. The strategies include: usage of adult literacy programs is a good channel to end FGM. Adult literacy programs help stop FGM through the knowledge they acquired in the centre. The knowledge and skills acquired from ADLP can be used to solve life problems or needs such as that of FGM. Parents or guardians cannot acquire the knowledge and skills they can use to curb the FGM without attending acquire educational knowledge and skills they can use in their different homes without attending the program. Those who do not participate in the ADLP will not understand the implication and negative effect of FGM. They will always take it as the societal norms. They met it in practice from their parents and so may want it to continue to reign. They may even fight against those who want to stop it by all means. Therefore, these strategies can really help to put an end to the FGM in each community if the program (Adult Literacy) is supported by individuals, non-government organizations, CBOs, civil society organization and the government. They can support by making sure the centres are functional, there is enough fund to run the place, and there are qualified facilitators enough infrastructures and equipment that will make the place conducive and interesting for the learners. This will attract more learners and there will be achievement in number of learners' enrolment. Increase in the enrolment will increase the ways of accelerating transformative strategies or putting an end to FGM in each community. If this drive spread to all communities of Nigeria, it will be discovered that Nigerians will achieve SDGs before 2030. The negative side effect of FGM is so huge that it should not be ignored or put by the side but all efforts should be on how to accelerate the transformative ways of putting an end to it through establishment and aggressive funding of adult literacy programs. This is because this is the only fast way to reach out to uneducated ones who do not even know how to read and write, how much more how to understand the negative, harmful and criminal effect of FGM to the girl child.

V. CONCLUSION

From the findings, we concluded that there are 13 strategies to accelerate the transformative ways of putting an end to FGM in Nsukka L. G. A. There is no significant difference

between the mean scores of facilitators and adult learners on how to accelerate the transformative ways of putting an end to FGM in Nsukka L. G. A. of Enugu State, Nigeria. There is need for supporting and strengthening adult literacy program to accelerate the transformative strategies in putting an end to FGM.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The state government should help support the funding of adult literacy programs so that it will be assessable to everyone.
2. More qualified facilitators should be employed so as to carry out their professional duties on the learners. This will help achieve the result needed towards ending FGM in our society.
3. NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, and individual philanthropists should also support in every capacity to see that adult literacy program is established in every community and with their monitoring teams sees to the FGM topic seriously emphasized during learning period.

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