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ADULT LEARNERS' ADOPTION OF GOAL-SETTING AS A SELF –REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POST LITERACY PROGRAMME IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT
The need to enhance adult learners' academic performance necessitated this study. The study determined the extent of adult learners' adoption of goal setting as a self –regulated learning strategy for enhancing academic performance in post literacy programme in Anambra state, Nigeria. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. A Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Forty- four thousand, four hundred and three (44,403) comprising 18,330 (male and 26,073 female) adult learners in 286 post literacy centres in Anambra state was used as the population for the study. A sample size of 888 (366 male and 522 female was drawn from the population using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Cronbach Alpha formula was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.90 which was considered reliable for the study. . Mean statistics and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and to determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings while t- test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted. This implies that any mean score of 2.50 and above was considered high extent and any below was regarded as low extent. A null hypothesis was accepted when the t- calculated was more than the t- critical and rejected when the t- calculated was less than the t- critical. The findings revealed that the adult learners in post literacy programme in Anambra state adopt goal- setting strategy to a low extent. Moreso, the findings further showed that gender did not significantly influence adult learners' mean ratings on adoption of goal setting as a strategy for enhancing their academic performance. The study recommends among others that the adult learners should learn how to adopt goal-setting strategy as it is an important learning strategy in every educational process.

***Keywords**:* Adult Learner, Goal setting, Academic Performance. Post Literacy Programme

Introduction

The concept of an adult learner has been defined differently by different scholars. Madu and Obiozor (2020) viewed an adult learner as a person who engages in any type of learning activities in order to deal with issues in life. An adult learner can be defined as a person undertake any flexible educational programme with intent to upgrade his knowledge, skills, values, attitude and be able to solve life problems (Obidiegwu, 2016). Similarly Adebola (2014) defined an adult learner as a person who is matured and engages in any learning activity. Learning activities for adult learners may be scheduled in day and evening time, it includes residential courses, weekend programmes, job training courses, extension work, seminars, workshops, conferences, community programmes and web programmes. An adult learner therefore, is any adult who engages in any learning activities in order to improve and increase his or her knowledge, attitudes values, skills and potentials. Hence, adult learners are matured persons that

engaged themselves in any educational activity (formal, non- formal or informal) for self-development. Braodbent and Poon (2015) postulated that adult learners learn better when they have self- regulated ability to control, manage and plan their learning actions. Self –regulation is a process of controlling one's behavior, emotion and thoughts in order to achieve a goal. Self- regulation is also known as self- acting, self- operating, self-direction and self- motivation. It refers to the ability to manage disruptive emotion and impulses. According to Andrea (2016), self- regulation is an act of self- control.

On the other hand, Self-regulated learning refers to learning that is guided by thinking, planning, monitoring and evaluating personal progress against a standard and motivation to learn. Self-regulated learning is a process that assists students in managing their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in order to successfully navigate their learning experiences. This process occurs when a learner's purposeful actions and processes are directed towards the acquisition of information or skills. Pintrich (2015) defined Self- regulated learning as an active and constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment. Zimmerman (2008) refers to self-regulated learning as a self- directed process which enables learners to acquire academic skills such as setting goals, selecting strategies and self-monitoring. Self- regulated learner monitors, directs, and regulates actions towards goal of information, acquisition and self –improvement. Also, it is learner's self-generated thoughts and actions that are systematically towards the attainment of their goals or a process whereby learners are active in their learning and construct meaning internally rather than passively receive knowledge from internal sources. In the process of self-regulated learning, adult learners set learning goals, plan, monitor and self-evaluate themselves. Self-regulated or monitoring activities include clearing the content of study, judging learning difficulties, accessing progress and predicting the learning outcome.

The importance of self-regulated learning cannot be overemphasized as it help learners to create better learning habits and strengthened their study skills (Wolters, 2011). It also provide adult learners with necessary learning strategies in order to enhance their academic performance and promote their learning ability (Boekaerts & Pintrich, 2015).

Self-regulated learning strategy is a learning plan used by learners to self- regulate their learning in order to achieve their academic goal. Hornby (2016) defined self- regulated learning strategy as a plan that is intended to achieve learning purpose or the process of planning something or carrying out a plan in a skillful way. According to Ceti (2015), self-regulated learning strategy occurs largely from the influence of learners' self- regulated thoughts, feelings, and behaviours which are oriented towards the attainment of goals. It is a cyclical process where learners plan for a task, monitor their performance and reflect on their outcome. Self-regulated learning strategies are research-based instrumental techniques to help learners monitor and manage their own learning skills and habits. In the context of this study, self- regulated learning strategies are plans of action design to help learners achieve a specific goal. Panadero (2017) asserted that self-regulated learning strategies reduce disruptive problems in the classroom by encouraging learners to manage their own behavior. Such strategies provide educators with time to work with small group or one and one with learners who require extra instruction. By applying self -regulated learning strategies, adult learners can monitor their learning process, become independent and responsible for their own learning. Zimmerman in Hilden and Shankland (2016) listed the self-

regulated learning strategies to include; goal-setting, planning, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, records keeping, monitoring, among others. This paper is concerned with goal -setting as a self-regulated learning strategy.

Goal setting refers to the standard that regulates an individual's action. Goal- setting according to Marizano, Pickering and Pallock (2019) is a process of establishing an outcome (a goal) to serve as the aim of one's action. A goal can be as simple as earning a good grade on an examination or as detailed as gaining a broad understanding of a topic. For example, if an adult learner set a long-term goal to do well in exam, he or she may set attainable goals such as studying for a set amount of time and using specific study strategies to help ensure success on the exam. Zimmerman (2004) posited that learners should set short term goals for their learning so as to track their own progress. Collins as cited in Madu and Obiozor (2020) buttressed that adult learning is directed towards a goal. The adult learner should therefore set short-term goals that are achievable. Goal setting helps to evaluate learner's academic performance. Academic performance refers to the achievement by the individual in the objectives related to various types of knowledge and skills. Allsoand, Ahmed and Qazi (2019) defined academic performance as the apparent demonstration of understanding concepts, skills, ideas and knowledge of a person. Allsoand, Ahmed Oazi stressed that when adult learners adopt goal – setting as a self- regulated learning strategy effectively, it will improve their learning performance in post literacy programme. Post literacy programme is a programme designed for mature individuals in the society who have acquired basic literacy education. The objective of post literacy programme in Anambra State is to help people who have acquired some basic skills of literacy to retain, consolidate and improve their quality of life and livelihood through the utilization of the knowledge gained in illiteracy classes. Albrecht and Sack (2018) called for the adoption of new strategies to make the teaching and learning in post literacy programme more attractive in order to encourage and motivate adult learners to become self- directed learners. One of these new strategies according to the authors is the goal -setting strategy.

More so, Zimmerman (2017) stated that in working with learners, it may be necessary for educators to initially assign goals to learners and help them achieve such goals. It is also pertinent to state that self-set goals would produce higher self-efficacy and better self-regulated performance than assign goals because learners would be committed to attaining their goals and feel efficacious about doing so.

According to Carnein, Lefrere and Steffens in Zimmermen (2017), improving adult learners self- set goals is necessary in order to have a clear picture of course expectations, which will help the learner concentrate on his or her efforts effectively towards attainment of those goals.

Ronnie (2021) opined that learners must experience the different goal types, components, and steps require to successfully reaching individual goals. Ronnie gave the following steps to successful academic goal implementation:

a. Set goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time sensitive: A second option for setting learners academic growth goals is to focus on an entire programme unit, benchmark assessment, and state some possibilities for which goals may be set.
b. Develop a plan of action: As stated earlier, simple writing down a goal does not impart learners learning. It is the activities that the learner will participate in during the learning process that have the potential to positively influence his achievement. In collaboration with the educator, the learner will have to brainstorm different possibilities beyond core instruction that could increase achievement.

c. Monitor progress: Frequently monitoring the impact that the activities have on learner's success is imperative. This step requires the educator to monitor the progress that the learner is making towards reaching established goals.
d. Celebrate success- even the small ones: As learner realize success on reaching his goals, it is important that accomplishments are celebrated (Rijt, Kang, Restoo, & Patil, 2018). Recognizing the efforts of learners will motivate them to strive for their greater success as encourage educator.
e. Educator goal setting is an important component of educators' effectiveness in their quest to help all learners succeed. Educator goal setting is an important component of educator's development (Ambrose, Bridges, Dipetro & Nroma, 2010). Goal setting is designed to focus learners on developing and mastering discrete skills that can impact on their performance, and achievement. Learners can use the goal setting process as one strategy to improve their learning. Ambrose, et al (2010) pointed out that instructors should provide learners with early success opportunities, which can be achieved through low stake target goals.

Goal setting involve establishing standard or objective to serve as aim of accomplishing learning goals. Moreover, when learners have clear objectives, they are more likely to seek feedback to close the gap between their current understanding or skill and the desired goal (Haltie & Limperly, 2018). Goals assist learners to stay focus on the objective of the learning and in determining what they will do to reach the goals.

Goals lead to adult learner's motivation and academic performance. It also motivates learners to exert demands and persist overtime. Ronnie (2021) also noted that the purpose of academic goal setting is to establish a positive correlation between the quality of teaching and learning, make instructional decisions based upon learner's data, create a mechanism for programme improvement, and increase effectiveness of learning. Connell (2016) advocated that learners should set academic goals for themselves which will assist them in developing their goals and that they should reinforce the same goal to enhance their interest. Research has found that allowing learners to set their goals enhances motivation and self - regulation perhaps because self-set goals produce higher goal commitment (Shunk, 2019). Other researchers however, have not sustained this conclusion because they believed that when people accept the legitimacy of signed goals and commit themselves to attaining them the benefits are as strong as when they set goals themselves. By understanding the role of goals, adult educators and other practitioners will be able to enhance their instructional work effectively with learners to assist them in learning effective ways of learning.

According to Dotson (2020) learners should be taught to record their goals on paper so that they can refer back to it throughout the learning process. The documentation should include a place for the specific goal, anticipated date for accomplishment, activities that will be implemented in an effort to achieve the goal, progress monitoring notes, and a place for both learners' signatures. Having learners sign the goal form increases the level of accountability and further confirms the expectation that the educator has for the learner.

Abe, Ilogu and Madueke (2019) asserted that goals motivate learners to exert extra effort, persist and focus attention on relevant task features. Specific goals also serve as guide to develop strategies that will help learners accomplish academic task in time. Basically, at the initial stage of a learning activity, learners have such goals as acquiring skills and knowledge, finishing work and obtain high academic performance. During the programme, learners usually observe, judge and

react to their perceptions of goals progress so that when a commitment is made, there would be the basis for comparison between their performance and the targeted goals.

Brown and Latham in Abe, llogu and Madueke (2019) indicated that in conditions where a learner set specific, difficult but realistic goals, academic performance is higher than when he is just asked to do his or her best without specific goals.

Adoption of goal setting strategy by adult learners for enhancing their academic performance could be influenced by gender (Remail, Ghazail, Kamaruddin & Kee, 2016). Hence, male and female adult learners could adopt this learning strategy differently for effective learning in literacy centres. Jones, Alexander and Estell (2015) found that male learners are more capable of setting their academic goals than female learners.

For a variety of reasons, goal setting tends to be unclear for educators and adult learners. Some adult learners seem not to understand the benefit of setting academic goals in any literacy programme and may ask why the responsibility for learning should be put on the learners. In turn, educators might not fully understand how to instill this important learning strategy into the learners' minds because they do not know what principle it really entails. Consequently, empirical research in the developed countries have documented that when learners are encouraged to set goals for themselves, it enhances their academic performance in skill-based courses.

However, in Nigeria, particularly in Anambra State, studies on adult learners' adoption of goal setting as a self-regulated learning strategy for enhancing academic performance are not overly known. This is relevant in order to arouse the interest of adult learners towards the adoption of goal setting strategy to enhance their academic performance in post literacy programme. Specifically, the study determined the extent of adult learners' adoption of goal setting as a strategy for enhancing their academic performance in post literacy programme in Anambra State.

Research question

One research question guided the study:

1. To what extent do adult learners adopt goal setting as a strategy for enhancing their academic performance in post literacy programme in Anambra State?

Hypothesis

One null hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significance difference between the mean ratings of male and female adult learners on the adoption of goal setting as a strategy for enhancing academic performances in post literacy programme.

Research Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Anambra state. The population of the study consisted of 44,403 adult learners, which comprised 18,330 male and 26,073 female adult learners in 286 post literacy centres within the six education zones in Anambra State. A sample size of 888 adult learners (366 male and 522 female) was used for the study. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample size using 2% from each population. According to Nworgu (2015), it is a technique by which elements are randomly drawn from each stratum in such a way that the relative proportions of the strata in the resultant sample are the same as the parent population. The literacy centres were first stratified according to the six education zone and 40% was used to select the centres from each education zone making a total of 114 post literacy centres for the study. A structured questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by administering 20 copies of the

instrument to adult learners in post literacy centers in Delta state which was not part of the study area. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.90 which was considered appropriate for the study. Mean statistics and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and to determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings respectively while t- test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted. This implies that any mean score of 2.50 and above was considered high extent and any below was regarded as low extent. A null hypothesis was accepted when the t- calculated was more than the t- critical and rejected when the t- calculated was less than the t- critical.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do adult learners adopt goal setting as a strategy for enhancing their academic performance in post literacy programme in Anambra State?

Table 1: **: Mean Ratings on the Extent Adult Learners Adopt Goal Setting as a Strategy for Enhancing Their Academic Performance in Post Literacy Programme. N=876**

	Extent of adoption of goal-setting as a strategy	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	I outline objectives to guide me in accomplishing my learning goals	2.48	.83	LE
2.	I set goals for each content area to enhance my learning	2.55	.75	HE
3.	I establish a direction for learning to enhance my academic performance	2.11	.82	LE
4.	I carry out my assignment as soon as they are given	2.51	.70	HE
5.	I sub-divide my long term goals at the beginning of my programme to enhance my learning	2.46	.74	LE
6.	I set academic goals to improve my interest in courses	2.63	.80	HE
7.	I seek for direction to achieve learning goals in order to enhance my academic performance	2.59	.80	HE
8.	I set academic goals to motivate me in learning courses	2.33	.62	LE
9.	I keep learning goals in mind to enhance myacademic performance in my programme	2.50	.30	HE
	Grand Mean Score	**2.46**	**.71**	**LE**

Table 1 shows the grand mean and standard deviation scores of 2.46 and .71 indicating that the extent to which adult learners adopt goal setting as a strategy for enhancing their academic performance is low. The analysis of the items shows that the respondents rated five (item 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9) of the nine listed items to be adopted to a high extent with their mean ratings ranging from 2.50 to 2.63. The remaining four items (item 1, 3, 5 and 8) were rated to be adopted to a low extent with their mean ranging from 2.11 to 2.48.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female adult learners on their adoption of goal setting as a

strategy for enhancing academic performances in post literacy programme.

Table 5: t-test Comparison of Male and Female Adult Learners on Their Adoption of Goal -Setting as a Strategy for Enhancing Academic Performances in Post Literacy Programme.

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	361	2.51	.64	874	1.93	1.96	Not-Sig
Female	515	2.40	.50				

The result in table 5 shows that the mean score for males (*M*=2.51, *SD=.64*) was not significantly greater than that of the females (*M=2.40*, *SD=.50*); *t-cal* =.1.93indicating that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female adult learners on their adoption of goal setting as a strategy for enhancing academic performances in post literacy programme. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The result from the analysis of the research question revealed that adult learners in post literacy programme in Anambra State adopted goal-setting as a strategy for enhancing their academic performance in post literacy programme to a low extent. This finding is in line with the earlier findings of Bishop in Moeller, Theiler and Wu (2019) who found that in spite of the importance of goal-setting to adult learners' academic performance, majority of adult learners do not set goals for their learning activities. This finding supports that of Cheung (2020) that adult learners do not set goal to enhance their learning and academic performance. Cheung (2020) outlined various reasons why adult learners do not set academic goals to include: their perception that goal setting has little effects on their academic performance in their programme, lack of goal setting experience, lack of knowledge and skills in the process of goal setting, and lack of strong interest in the programme.

In contrast, Abe, Ilogu and Madueke (2019) found that adult learners at the initial stage of their learning activity set academic goals such as acquiring skills and knowledge, finishing work and making good grades. The finding of Rada (2017) is also not in line with the finding of this study. Rada found that goal setting strategy was the most used strategy among adult learners. This corroborates the findings of Moeller (2019) who disclosed that many adult learners often create their own learning goals to meet their personal needs and interests. The finding of the corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female adult learners on their adoption of goal setting as a strategy for enhancing academic performances in post literacy programme. This finding agree with the findings of Zhang (2020) who revealed that adult learners regardless of gender did not always set goals to enhance their academic performance. This difference in finding may be the reason why many adult learners drop from the programme before completion because they do not set initial goals during enrollment. The finding of this study implies that adult learners in post literacy programme in Anambra state do not have set goals in mind to achieve while enrolling in the programme, hence,

the educators should encourage the learners to set realistic goals at the beginning of the programme and assist them in achieving them. This will go a long way to arouse their interest in the programme.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that adult learners adopt goal- setting strategy for enhancing their academic performance to a low extent. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female adult learners on the adoption of goal setting strategy for enhancing their academic performance in post literacy programme in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers proffered the following recommendations:

1. Adult educators or facilitators should emphasis on the teaching of self-regulated learning strategies to enable adult learners acquire self-regulated learning skills. This will enable the adult learners to adopt goal setting strategy for enhancing their academic performance in post literacy programme.
2. Adult learners should learn how to adopt goal-setting strategy as it is an important learning strategy in every educational process.
3. Adult education Administrators should organize in-service or on-the-job training such as workshops, conferences and seminars for facilitators in their various centres to enable them up-date their skills for effective teaching of goal –setting strategy to adult learners.
4. Federal and State government should provide conducive teaching and learning environment so as to motivate adult learners to learn and support their progress in learning.

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