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Challenges Faced in the Implementation of Adult Literacy: A Case of Selected Schools in Marginalised Communities of Chitambo District

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Abstract

This study examined the challenges faced in the implementation of adult literacy programmes in selected schools within marginalized communities of Chitambo District in Central Province, Zambia. The study was guided by three key objectives: to identify the main challenges hindering the delivery of adult literacy education, to determine the effects of these challenges on programme implementation, and to explore practical strategies for overcoming them. The theoretical framework was anchored on social exclusion theory, Human Capital Theory and Andragogy theory which collectively informed the analysis of how structural, socio-cultural, and institutional factors interact to influence adult literacy outcomes. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach with an exploratory sequential aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic. Data was collected from 100 participants, including literacy adult learners, community leaders, and

policy implementers through structured questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data was quantitatively analysed, while qualitative data was thematically analysed. The findings revealed that limited government financial support, inadequate teaching materials, lack of trained facilitators, inadequate learning space, and limited community support were the major barriers to successful program delivery. Additionally, socio-economic constraints and negative attitudes toward adult education significantly impacted program effectiveness. However, strong community engagement, government support, and flexible learning models emerged as potential strategies to enhance the success of adult literacy programs. The study recommends provision of financial resources, teaching and learning resources, capacity-building initiatives, and increased stakeholder collaboration.

Keywords: Adult Literacy, Chitambo District, Community Engagement, Learning Barriers, Marginalized Communities, Program Implementation, and Stakeholder Collaboration

1. Introduction

Literacy is crucial for individuals, communities and societies. It enables individual acquire new skills, access better education that increase independence and self-confidence. It promotes social mobility and equality by bridging the gap between social – economic groups and fostering community engagement and participation. It is for this reason that the government through ministry of education in the directorate of open and distance education spearheads adult education so as to empower citizens through education.

This research henceforth brings to light challenges which affect the implementation of adult education in chitambo district and determine the effect of these challenges on the smooth running of the literacy education programme. It further explored potential strategies for overcoming these challenges in chitambo district.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading and writing help individuals express themselves effectively and understand others. Literacy is more than just knowing the vowels it's a key that opens doors to better opportunities, improved livelihoods, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to society. In Zambia, the government has invested in adult literacy education programs to address this issue, but many communities, especially in rural areas like Chitambo District, are still struggling. The study shined a light on these challenges, aiming to uncover why literacy programs fall short in such areas and explored how they could be improved to

transform lives.

Literacy is a cornerstone of individual empowerment and national development, providing the foundation for economic growth, social inclusion, and personal well-being. Globally, over 773 million adults still lack basic literacy skills, with the majority residing in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2022) ^[22]. In Zambia, literacy remains a pressing issue, particularly in rural and marginalized communities where access to education is limited. According to the 2020 Education Statistical Bulletin, literacy rates in rural Zambia lag significantly behind urban areas, with women and youth disproportionately affected. Marginalized districts such as Chitambo, characterized by high poverty levels and geographical isolation, exemplify this disparity.

Education is a key enabler of Zambia's development agenda, as outlined in the eight National Development Plan (8NDP) and Vision 2030. Access to education is essential for achieving these goals, as they provide skills needed for employment, entrepreneurship, and participation in civic life. However, despite their potential, literacy initiatives in marginalized areas often struggle due to systemic challenges. Addressing these obstacles is not only critical for meeting national educational targets but also for ensuring equity and social justice. Researching on these challenges helped to identify effective strategies to make literacy education accessible and impactful for marginalized populations in Chitambo District.

Globally, numerous efforts have been made to address youth and adult illiteracy, with initiatives like UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) movement and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. Programs such as UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) have targeted 35 countries with the highest illiteracy rates, emphasizing adult education and community-based learning (UNESCO, 2022) ^[22]. Additionally, large-scale campaigns like Cuba's "Yo, Sí Puedo" (Yes, I Can) program have been adapted and implemented in various countries, leveraging audio-visual tools and simplified materials to reach marginalized populations. These efforts highlight the importance of tailored interventions and cross-sector collaboration in tackling literacy challenges.

In Africa, literacy programs have often been integrated with broader development goals. For example, Ethiopia implemented the Integrated Functional Adult Education (IFAE) program, linking literacy with practical skills like agriculture and health education (Woldehana & Lemma, 2019) ^[23]. Similarly, South Africa's Kha RI Gude Mass Literacy Campaign aimed to teach literacy to over 4.7 million adults between 2008 and 2016, focusing on reaching women and rural populations (Department of Basic Education, South Africa, 2017). Despite these efforts, challenges such as funding shortages, lack of qualified facilitators, and socio-cultural barriers have limited their long-term impact.

Zambia's National Literacy Campaign, launched in the 1990s, sought to reduce illiteracy by establishing Functional Literacy Centers across the country. These centers provided adults with basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills, often integrating lessons with income-generating activities. More recently, programs like the Zambia National Adult Literacy Policy have aimed to institutionalize literacy education, ensuring sustained support and resource

allocation (Ministry of General Education, 2021). While these initiatives have achieved some success, they have struggled to address the unique needs of marginalized communities, such as those in Chitambo District, where geographic isolation and resource constraints remain significant obstacles.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite global and national efforts to improve literacy rates, marginalized communities in Zambia, such as those in Chitambo District, continue to experience low literacy levels. According to the 2020 Education Statistical Bulletin, rural literacy rates in Zambia remain at 55%, significantly lower than the urban average of 81% (Ministry of General Education, 2021). This disparity is exacerbated by a lot of challenges that discourage adult educations.

The Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) emphasizes focusing on increased access to, and improving the quality of education as an intervention to contribute in the reduction of poverty and inequality although in marginalized regions many adult fail to access literacy programs due to some constraints. These challenges undermine the government's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all by 2030.

Given these realities, there was a pressing need to investigate the specific challenges which hindered the implementation of adult literacy education in marginalised communities in Chitambo District. The research tried to fill the knowledge gap by identifying these challenges and proposing solutions to enhance the effectiveness of literacy programmes in these areas.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to establish and analyse the challenges faced in implementing adult literacy education programmes in marginalised communities in Chitambo District. The study aimed to propose practical solutions that stakeholders can adopt to enhance the effectiveness of these programs.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To establish the main challenges affecting the implementation of adult literacy education programmes in marginalized communities of Chitambo.
2. To determine the effects of these challenges on the smooth running of literacy programmes.
3. To explore potential strategies for overcoming these challenges in Chitambo District.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the main challenges affecting the implementation of adult literacy education in marginalized communities in Chitambo District?
2. How do these challenges affect the smooth running of literacy programmes?
3. What strategies can be employed to address the identified challenges?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it brought out specific challenges that hinder the success of adult literacy programmes in Chitambo District and provided valuable

strategies that policymakers, policy implementers and educators can use to design more effective and sustainable interventions.

The study was important because it would help in understanding and addressing the obstacles to literacy education thereby bridging the urban-rural literacy gap and promoting social equity.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study focused exclusively on four selected centres in Chitambo District, which might have limited the generalisability of the findings to other marginalised communities in Zambia. Logistical challenges such as poor road infrastructure and long distances between schools affected the researcher's ability to collect data comprehensively. Thirdly, the study relied on self-reported data from participants, which could have influenced by recall bias or social desirability bias. Additionally, limited access to recent records and documentation on the implementation of literacy programmes in the district restricted the depth of analysis.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study focused on four selected centres from four zones which are Chipaata Zone, Mwimbula Zone, Kafinda Zone and Mpelembe Zone in Chitambo District, representing marginalised communities. It examined challenges specific to adult literacy education programmes and did not cover other forms of education or literacy initiatives outside this scope.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was underpinned by three theories and these were social exclusion, human capital theory and Andragogy theory. Social Exclusion Theory explains how marginalized individuals or groups are systematically excluded from essential resources, such as education, due to socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. This theory is particularly relevant in understanding the challenges in implementing adult literacy education in marginalized communities like Chitambo.

According to Silver (1994) exclusion can manifest in various forms, such as limited access to education, cultural barriers, or the lack of recognition of certain groups' educational needs. This theory guided the identification of these barriers by focusing on how marginalised groups in Chitambo face systemic challenges that limit their access to literacy programs. Factors such as geographical isolation, poverty, and gender norms were explored in relation to their role in creating exclusion from literacy opportunities. This helped to pinpoint the specific challenges that hindered programmes implementation.

Human Capital Theory posits that education and skills development are critical investments in human potential, leading to higher productivity and economic growth (Schultz, 1961). The theory suggests that the lack of literacy skills, particularly in marginalised communities, limits an individual's ability to contribute effectively to society and the economy.

This theory guided the assessment of the impact of challenges on the effectiveness of literacy programs by focusing on how barriers such as poor infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and limited resources prevent individuals from fully benefiting from literacy programs.

The theory helped to examine the broader socio-economic consequences of low literacy levels in Chitambo, including how these affect individuals' personal development, employment opportunities, and community engagement.

It is important to mention that, to find the strategies to challenges in the implementation of adult literacy education in marginalised communities the researcher used the andragogy theory which was developed by Malcolm Knowles in 1968. According to Ivan (2024) andragogy means the art and science of teaching adults, as opposed to pedagogy, which is the art and science of teaching children. The andragogy theory posits that the adult learner: is much better suited to direct their own learning than a child learner. The adults uses their own knowledge base and life experience to aid in their learning. Ivan (2024) argued that adult learners need to see the value of learning hence they are ready to learn when the material is of immediate relevance, such as in a new job, social, or life role; wants to be able to apply new informant; won immediately to solve problems in their life. For this reason, they need to have a voice in both the planning and evaluation of their learning experiences.

1.10 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on the challenges faced in the implementation of adult literacy programs in marginalized communities in Zambia, there remains a notable gap in understanding how community-based interventions, specifically those tailored to the unique socio-economic contexts of rural districts like Chitambo, can effectively address these barriers. While studies have explored issues such as poverty (Mubanga, 2019), infrastructure (Phiri, 2018), and the role of local leaders (Chilufya, 2020), few have examined how localized, context-sensitive approaches that integrate both educational and socio-economic support systems could enhance participation and retention in literacy programs for marginalized adults in rural areas. This gap suggests the need for research that focuses on developing and testing community-driven, multi-sectoral models of literacy education in underserved regions of Zambia.

2. Literature Review

2.1 World View of the challenges faced in the implementation of adult education

Globally, literacy has been recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for development. Efforts like UNESCO's Literacy for All initiative and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) have sought to promote inclusive literacy education. However, challenges such as limited funding, socio-cultural barriers, and gender disparities persist, particularly in developing countries (UNESCO, 2022) ^[22]. For example, the global adult illiteracy rate remains at 12% as of 2020, with the majority concentrated in low-income regions (World Bank, 2021) ^[24]. Brown and Williams (2018) conducted a study in rural areas of Latin America, particularly focusing on the challenges to adult literacy education in marginalized communities. Their study aimed to identify and understand the structural, social, and economic barriers that limit the effectiveness of adult literacy programs in these regions.

The study identified several key challenges, including poor infrastructure, limited access to formal education systems, and the economic necessity for adults to prioritize work over education. Additionally, the study found that adult learners

often lacked motivation and confidence due to previous educational failures, further deterring them from enrolling in literacy programs. This finding aligns with studies by González and Torres (2017) and Pérez (2019), which highlighted similar issues in rural Latin American settings.

Brown and Williams (2018) argued that overcoming these barriers required a multi-faceted approach, focusing on improving infrastructure, offering flexible learning schedules, and creating programs that cater specifically to the needs of adult learners. They also stressed the importance of providing psychosocial support to boost learners' confidence and motivation. The study concluded that the integration of community-based and learner-centered approaches is essential for the success of adult literacy programs.

These findings were critically scrutinized to find if they can relate to the context of Chitambo District, to find whether infrastructure and socio-economic challenges present substantial barriers to the success of adult literacy programs. In Chitambo, the lack of adequate roads, limited access to electricity, and the scarcity of learning materials create an environment where effective educational interventions are often hindered (Chitambo Integrated Development Plan 2022). Furthermore (Brown and Williams (2018)'s finding outlined that socio-economic factors such as poverty and limited employment opportunities contribute to a high level of illiteracy, especially among adults. Many potential learners struggle to prioritize education over immediate financial needs, further complicating efforts to enhance adult literacy in the district. As such, these challenges emphasized the necessity for tailored interventions that account for the unique geographical and socio-economic realities of the area.

The study's emphasis on flexible, community-driven approaches offers valuable insights into how these barriers can be mitigated in Chitambo. By focusing on community involvement and adapting literacy programs to the specific needs of the local population, it becomes possible to create sustainable solutions that resonate with the people they are intended to serve. These approaches involve utilizing local knowledge, community leaders, and existing networks to improve access to literacy programs, making them more accessible and relevant. Informed by the findings of this study, strategies for overcoming barriers to adult literacy in Chitambo prioritize inclusivity, practical solutions, and a focus on local needs, ultimately ensuring that adult learners are empowered to overcome the challenges they face in the pursuit of education.

2.2 Region View of challenges faced in the implementation of adult education.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, adult literacy rates are among the lowest globally, with approximately 64% of adults are literate, compared to the global average of 86% (UNESCO, 2021). Countries like Ethiopia and Uganda have implemented Integrated Functional Adult Education (IFAE) programs to link literacy with vocational skills, but these programs often face resource and infrastructure limitations (Woldehana and Lemma, 2019) ^[23]. In Southern Africa, South Africa's Kha Ri Gude campaign made significant strides but struggled to sustain outcomes due to financial constraints (Department of Basic Education, 2017). These examples illustrate the region's ongoing struggle to bridge the literacy gap.

A similar study was conducted in the rural communities of South Africa by Mokoena (2018) ^[20] who focused on the challenges faced by adult learners in accessing literacy programs. The study aimed to identify the barriers to adult literacy education in marginalized areas and explore how these challenges impacted the success of literacy programs.

The study revealed that rural communities in South Africa face numerous barriers to adult literacy education, ranging from inadequate infrastructure to deeply entrenched social and cultural challenges. A significant obstacle is the lack of trained teachers, which limits the quality of instruction and discourages potential learners. Cultural factors, such as traditional gender norms, further exacerbate these challenges. Many women, who constitute a large proportion of adult learners, are unable to participate in literacy programs due to the heavy burden of domestic responsibilities. This dynamic highlights the intersection of gender inequality with educational access, perpetuating a cycle where women remain disadvantaged in their ability to gain literacy skills and contribute to community development.

Additionally, the study highlighted that illiteracy in these rural communities is deeply rooted, with some adults having had no prior exposure to formal education. The absence of foundational literacy skills presents a significant challenge for both learners and educators, making it harder for programs to achieve meaningful progress. Compounding these issues is the chronic underfunding of adult literacy initiatives, which leaves programs ill-equipped to provide adequate resources, facilities, or training. In his study Mokoena (2018) ^[20] emphasized that a combination of economic, social, and cultural factors severely limits the accessibility and effectiveness of literacy education for adults in rural areas, creating a need for targeted interventions that address these systemic barriers holistically.

Besides, Mokoena (2018) ^[20] concluded that addressing the educational needs of marginalized rural communities in South Africa requires a multifaceted approach. This includes significant investment in infrastructure to improve access to quality education facilities, ensuring schools have adequate classrooms, sanitation, and learning materials. Additionally, teacher training is essential to equip educators with the skills and tools needed to handle the unique challenges faced in rural settings, such as multi-grade teaching and cultural sensitivities. He therefore emphasized the importance of gender-sensitive programming to address disparities and promote inclusivity, particularly for girls who often face barriers such as early marriages, cultural expectations, and lack of sanitary facilities in schools.

These findings are particularly relevant to Chitambo District, where similar challenges exist, especially in rural areas with limited access to educational resources. Like South Africa, Zambia's rural regions often struggle with inadequate infrastructure, poorly trained teachers, and gender-related disparities that hinder educational attainment. Adopting a comprehensive approach, including targeted investments in school facilities, continuous professional development for teachers, and gender-equitable policies, could significantly improve educational outcomes in Chitambo District. This alignment with Mokoena (2018)'s ^[20] findings highlights the universality of these challenges in rural education and underscores the need for context-

specific but globally informed strategies to enhance access and quality.

2.3 Local view of challenges faced in the implementation of adult education

In Zambia, literacy efforts have included the National Literacy Campaign of the 1990s and the Zambia National Adult Literacy Policy. These initiatives sought to address rural-urban disparities in literacy levels but often lacked consistent funding and sufficient trained facilitators (Ministry of General Education, 2021). Rural districts like Chitambo remain disproportionately affected, with illiteracy rates as high as 45%, compared to the national average of 25% (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2022). Cultural factors and the absence of localized curricula have also contributed to the slow progress in improving literacy outcomes in marginalized communities.

Chansa (2021) ^[11] carried out a study on the challenges faced in implementing adult literacy programs in rural Zambia, specifically in Lusaka Province. The aim of the study was to investigate the socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural barriers that impede the successful implementation of adult literacy programs in marginalized rural areas.

The study revealed that a significant barrier to the success of adult literacy programs was the insufficient financial resources available to support these initiatives. Many adult learners faced economic hardships that made it difficult to afford the basic expenses associated with attending literacy programs, such as transport and the purchase of essential learning materials. This financial constraint created a major obstacle, especially for individuals living in rural areas where transportation options are limited and the cost of commuting can be prohibitively high. In addition to these financial burdens, the study found that there was a severe shortage of trained literacy facilitators, particularly in remote regions. This shortage contributed to disparities in the quality of education offered, with many learners receiving subpar instruction due to the lack of skilled teachers to effectively guide them through the learning process.

Moreover, the study highlighted several infrastructural challenges that hindered the effectiveness of literacy programs. There was a marked deficiency in essential educational facilities, including classrooms, computers, and even basic teaching aids, which significantly slowed the progress of these programs. This lack of infrastructure was particularly pronounced in underserved rural communities, where the educational environment was not conducive to learning. Social and cultural barriers further compounded the issue, with many communities holding traditional beliefs that undervalued adult education, especially for women. In some areas, cultural norms perpetuated the idea that education was primarily for younger individuals, often sidelining the needs of adult learners. These deeply ingrained attitudes, combined with limited resources and inadequate educational infrastructure, created a challenging environment for adult literacy programs to thrive.

Chansa (2021) ^[11] argued that adult literacy programs would be more effective if they integrated local traditions and cultures while ensuring adequate financial and infrastructural support. The study recommended a more localized approach to literacy education, which included community-based models that leverage local resources and

leaders to encourage participation.

The findings from the study are highly relevant to my research, as they underscore the socio-economic and cultural barriers faced by individuals in rural areas, which significantly hinder access to adult literacy education. In many rural communities, financial constraints remain a primary challenge. Many adults in these areas struggle to afford the costs associated with adult education programs, including tuition fees, transportation, and learning materials. These financial burdens prevent many individuals, particularly those from low-income households, from enrolling in or continuing education, limiting their opportunities for personal and professional development. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure in rural areas, such as schools, classrooms, and learning resources, exacerbates these barriers, making it difficult to provide adequate education services to adult learners.

Cultural attitudes toward education in rural areas also play a significant role in shaping participation in adult literacy programs. In some communities, education may be seen as less important for adults, especially for women or older individuals who may have already entered the workforce or household responsibilities. Such cultural perceptions can discourage participation in adult literacy programs, as individuals may feel that education is not necessary or valuable at their stage in life. In Chitambo District, these same cultural attitudes have created resistance to formal education, as people prioritize traditional knowledge and practices over formal schooling. This combination of financial, infrastructural, and cultural factors creates a challenging environment for adult literacy education in rural areas, and understanding these barriers is crucial for designing effective programs that can address the unique needs of these communities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study was a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges in the implementation of literacy programs in marginalised communities. Hence a mixed-methods approach with an exploratory sequential design aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic. The qualitative component was used to explore the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders involved in these literacy programmes, while the quantitative component helped to quantify the extent of the challenges and establish the effect of these challenges on the running of literacy programmes. The mixed-methods approach allowed for triangulation of data, providing richer and more robust insights into the problem.

3.2 Study Site

The study was conducted in Chitambo District, located in the Central Province of Zambia. Chitambo was chosen because it was rural area with a relatively high proportion of marginalised populations, including adults who have limited access to formal education.

3.3 Population, Sample and Sample Size

The target population for this study included 62 adults participating in literacy education programmes, 22 Community leaders and 16 Policy implementers (District

Education Board Secretary, District Education Standards Officer, Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and adult facilitators) involved in adult education in Chitambo District. Specifically, the study targeted individuals who were directly involved in the planning, implementation, and participation in literacy programmes. This population was chosen because it had first-hand experience and insights into the challenges and barriers affecting the successful implementation of literacy programmes. The sample size was determined using a formula for finite populations, ensuring that it is large enough to be representative of the target population. This sample size allows for a sufficient amount of data to be collected for both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study.

3.4 Sampling Procedure/Techniques

A combination of purposive and random sampling was used to select participants for the study. Purposive sampling was employed to select community leaders, policy implementers or educators, as they have specific knowledge and experience related to the implementation of literacy programs. For the literacy program participants, random sampling was used to ensure that every participant has an equal chance of being selected. This method minimizes bias and ensures that a diverse group of participants, including both men and women from various socio-economic backgrounds, is included in the study.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure/Techniques

Data was collected in several phases, beginning with obtaining the necessary ethical clearance and permissions from local authorities and community leaders. In data collection process a mixed method approach was used where a combination of questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group techniques were deployed.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two phases, corresponding to the two components of the study. The quantitative data collected from the structured questionnaires was analysed manually and descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and charts were used to summarise the data. The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Key themes and patterns related to the challenges of implementing literacy programs were identified and coded.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study. The following ethical guidelines were adhered to. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before data collection begun. All data collected was treated with confidentiality. The researcher respected the dignity and autonomy of participants and potential harm was minimised as participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns about the study.

4. Findings and Discussions

The study findings reveal the challenges affecting the implementation of adult literacy programmes in

marginalised communities of Chitambo District, Zambia. The research objectives aimed to: (1). Establish the main challenges affecting the implementation of adult literacy education programmes. (2) Determine the effects of these challenges on the smooth running of the literacy programmes. (3) Explore potential strategies to overcome these challenges.

4.1 Challenges identified by learners of adult education

Table 1.1: Challenges identified by learners of adult education

S. No	Challenges identified by learners of adult education	Frequency	Percentages
1	Limited government financial support	19	31
2	Insufficient learning materials	15	24
3	Lack of qualified facilitators	14	22.5
4	Poor infrastructure (e.g. classrooms)	14	22.5
	Total	62	100

Source: Author, 2025

The responses given by adult learners indicated that there were some challenges faced in adult education learning. The challenges were ranked as follows: limited government support was first at 31%. Financial neglect of adult literacy is not unique to Chitambo; it is a widespread issue in many developing countries. According to Aitchison and Land (2016) [5], adult literacy programs often receive the least priority in educational budgets, despite their proven impact on social and economic development. Insufficient learning materials was second at 24%; and lack of qualified facilitators and poor infrastructure were ranked third at 22.5% respectively.

The study further revealed that there were also other challenges that affected the implementation of adult literacy programmes in Chitambo District as identified by policy implementers and local leaders these included lack of community awareness and sensitisation; social, economic and cultural barriers; low motivation and irregular attendance by adult learners and lack of monitoring and evaluation.

4.2 The impact of challenges on the effectiveness of literacy programmes

In order to assess the impact of challenges on the effectiveness of literacy programme the participants gave out the following responses: 18 participants indicated that, the impact of challenges significantly affected learning outcomes and this was 29% of the total responses. This has the effect because the chronic underfunding restricts programme expansion and leads to high attrition rate among volunteer facilitators who feel undervalued and unsupported. 16 participants mentioned that there was no impact on the learning outcomes and this gave 26 in terms of percentage; 9 indicated that there was little impact on learning outcomes and these responses were at 14%; 8 participants said that the challenges partially affected learning outcomes and this culminated into 13% and 11 participants which was 18% of the total responses did not answer this question.

4.3 Effect of lack of teaching and learning resources on the smooth running of the adult education programme

It is worth noting that without access to appropriate materials, learners are unable to reinforce the skills they are

taught and facilitators struggle to deliver lessons effectively. These findings are in line with Kazeem and Ige (2018) ^[16] who observed that a lack of educational materials significantly affects the delivery of adult literacy programs in rural Africa.

4.4 Effect of lack of facilitators on the smooth running of the adult programme

The gap in facilitator training not only affects instructional quality but also impacts learners progress and retention. Trained facilitators are better equipped to create inclusive, respectful and effective learning environments, particularly when dealing with illiterate or semi-literate adults. This situation reflects the findings of Mgqwashu (2016) ^[17] who argued that without investment in the training and professional development of adult educators, programs are unlikely to achieve meaningful outcomes.

4.5 Effect of inadequate learning space on the adult programme

The inadequacy of physical learning spaces severely limits the success of adult literacy initiatives. Such conditions not only affect attendance but also hinder learners' ability to concentrate and participate actively. The poor state of infrastructure is a major deterrent to sustained engagement. Research by Lwanga and Omolewa (2017) confirms that adult learning is most effective in environments that are safe, accessible, and conducive to adult needs.

It is therefore important to mention that challenges affect the smooth running of the adult literacy education programme.

4.6 Effective solutions (strategies) to improve access to the adult literacy programme

Table 1.2: Effective solutions to improve access to the adult literacy programme

S. No	Effective solutions to improve access to the programme	Frequency	Percentage
1	More government funding	24	39
2	Involvement of local leaders	22	35
3	Improve transport and infrastructure	13	21
4	Community based awareness	3	5
	Total	62	100

Source: Author, 2025

Table 1.2 shows that 39% or 24 participants suggested that government to increase funding as an effective solution to improve access to the programme. Those who indicated involvement of local leadership as an effective solution were 22 and this was 35% of the total responses. Amongst the 62 participants, 13 of them or 21% indicated that improvement of transport and infrastructure can be an effective solution to improve access to the programme while 5% or 3 participants indicated community based awareness as an effective solution to access the programme.

4.7 Strategies to overcome financial and material challenges

The central government and local government to partner with other non-governmental organisations such as churches and local stakeholders. These partnerships can offer financial support, materials, and additional training opportunities. According to Aitchison and Alidou (2020), multi-sectoral collaborations can enhance the sustainability

and reach of adult education programs by pooling resources and expertise. Adult learner classes should also register as Multi-Purpose Cooperatives or clubs so that they have a chance of applying for either government grant or a loan as well as engage themselves in income generating activities which can financially sustain the programme.

4.8 Strategies to overcome challenges on lack of facilitators and motivation

Engaging successful former learners as peer educators sustain interest and support among learners. These individuals can serve as role models and help with outreach. The use of peer educators is also supported by Shah and Rabbani (2015), who found that peer-led learning models enhance community trust and participation in adult education programs. The other strategy was strengthening community ownership and volunteerism by forming literacy committees to support network for both learners and facilitator.

4.9 Strategies to overcome challenges of learning space

The lack of dedicated learning spaces was identified as a major issue. Establishing permanent centers for adult learners can provide a stable and dignified environment for education. This strategy aligns with recommendations by Dutta (2019), who found that specialized adult learning spaces contribute to increased attendance and improved educational outcomes due to their focus and learner-centric design. In addition the local community should be engage in providing up front materials such as moulding of bricks, ferrying of sand, provide labour (brick layers) and the government to provide funding so that infrastructure can be set up.

5. Conclusion

The conclusions on objective one were that there were a number of challenges that were identified and these included limited government financial support, inadequate teaching and learning materials, insufficiently trained facilitators, inadequate learning space and a general lack of community awareness and support. The conclusions on objective two were that challenges identified affect the smooth running of the adult programme. The challenges on insufficient funding from government affects the smooth running of adult literacy programmes. The shortage of learning and teaching materials do compromises both the quality of instructions and demoralises both learners and the facilitators; lack of trained facilitators affect quality delivery of the programme because they lack literacy skills and methodologies. The conclusions on objective three were that there were a number of strategies that were identified such as government to increase resource allocation by partnering with other stakeholders, establishing permanent structures or adult learning centres; integration of adult learning with income generating activities; involvement of traditional and religious leaders in advocacy; and collaboration with NGOs and the private sector.

5.1 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

- **Provision of financial resources:** The Government to increase allocation of funding for adult programmes.

- **Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources:** The Government through ministry of education should ensure the timely supply of adequate learning materials, including books, visual aids, and stationery.
- **Train and Capacity Building for Facilitators:** Government and District Education Board Office should prioritise the recruitment of trained facilitators and professional development of adult literacy facilitators through targeted training and refresher programmes.
- **Improvement of Learning Infrastructure:** The Central Government and Local Government to establish literacy centres or upgrade safe, accessible, and comfortable learning spaces to promote consistent attendance and effective learning.
- **Community Mobilization and Sensitization:** The District education Board office and Local leaders to conduct awareness campaigns to reduce stigma, encourage participation, and foster community ownership of adult education initiatives.
- **Incentivise Participation:** The Government to introduce motivation schemes such as transport support, meal provision and recognition certificates to encourage learners and facilitators' commitment.
- **Flexible Program Design:** The facilitators to design adaptive class schedules to accommodate adult learners' domestic and economic responsibilities.

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