



PERCEPTION OF LECTURERS ON THE ROLE OF DIGITAL LITERACY ON ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined lecturers' perceptions of how digital literacy can aid in the alleviation of poverty. A survey-based descriptive research design was adopted. The study answered one research question and tested one hypothesis based on 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study consists of 80 lecturers from the Department of Computer Science at the seven universities in Anambra State. A sample size of 28 professors and 2 universities was obtained through a multi-stage method. A structured questionnaire, titled "Digital Literacy for Poverty Alleviation Questionnaire (DLPAQ)" was used for data collection. Three specialists were used to determine the face validity of the DLPAQ instrument. The reliability coefficient, which was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, was 0.82. One research assistant was engaged by the researcher to directly approach respondents and gather pertinent data. For the study questions and testing of the hypotheses, the data was analysed using simple arithmetic mean and t-test, respectively. The study discovered, among other things, that digital literacy empowers individuals with relevant knowledge and abilities necessary to work as freelancers, producers of digital content, digipreneurs, and employees of digital technology companies, all of which can provide them with a living.

Keywords:

Lecturers, Role, Digital Literacy, Poverty Alleviation, Digipreneur.

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Introduction

Nigeria faces numerous socio-economic challenges, including high poverty rates, unemployment, and underemployment. This is because Nigeria as Africa's most populous country and one of its largest economies, is still grappling with a stark disparity in income, education, and access to opportunities. Throwing more light on the foregoing claim, Raden et al. (2022) affirmed that inequality has, in turn, contributed to the perpetuation of poverty across the nation, with a significant portion of the population struggling to meet basic human needs. This underscores the fact that poverty remains a pressing issue in Nigeria, despite its vast resources and potential for economic growth. It is also comprehensible that poverty continues to be a widespread and entrenched issue in Nigeria, impacting millions of people and impeding the country's overall development. Ubabudu and Muraina (2016) substantiated their assertion that education is a crucial element in the advancement of any country, serving as a driving force behind the generation of wealth, the resolution of problems, and the acquisition of knowledge. They continued by saying that without education, nothing works and that it is the engine room and doorway to the development of human capital and a successful life. Standardized education systems encourage innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity in the general population by providing people with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary for effective operations (Ubabudu, 2023). A strong education system may contribute to the overall development of the nation by producing a workforce that is commendable, modern, and better equipped to meet the demands of the labor market and diverse enterprises (Ubabudu, 2023). The value of digital literacy is one of the key concepts of 21st-century education.

For this reason, the Nigerian government, in collaboration with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), launched several digital literacy initiatives, such as the Digital Nigeria Program and the Digital Literacy and Skills Initiative (NDLSI), to combat poverty related to digital technology (Raden et al., 2022). Due to this, Anekwe (2017) said that in the complicated and varied terrain of Nigeria's high rate of unemployment and poverty, the role of digital literacy has emerged as a convincing option for easing the situation. Anekwe emphasized the importance of digital literacy in providing people and communities with the knowledge and abilities required for self-employment, a wider range of job opportunities, and access to resources that can reduce poverty.

This is required because, according to Egole (2023) in Ubabudu (2023), the unemployment rate was predicted to be 40.6% in 2023, translating to nearly 90 million jobless individuals. This is an increase from the 37.7% rate in 2022 and is likely to surpass that number by 2024 and beyond. Due to the high unemployment rate linked to this status and the potential for numerous negative cascade consequences that might make society uninhabitable, this becomes a national issue (Ubabudu, 2023). Understanding the viewpoints of university lecturers is critical since they have a big influence on curriculum development and the design of the educational system, as noted by Anekwe (2017) and Egole in Ubabudu (2023).

Lecturers are the backbone of higher education in Nigeria, responsible for imparting knowledge and shaping the intellectual and professional growth of the nation's youth. They are typically academics, and experts in various fields, employed by universities, polytechnics, and colleges to deliver quality education and facilitate research as well as contribute to community services. Corroborating this, Orji (2023) asserted that lecturers serve as the bridge between students and academic content, and their roles extend beyond the classroom, influencing the intellectual and personal development of students. This affirms that their insights about digital literacy, irrespective of gender, play a pivotal role in preparing learners for the workforce in the digital economy, from which they might earn income for a living. This also points to the fact that lecturers' inputs and opinions are necessary to make the crusade for digital literacy a reality in Nigeria, and Anambra State in



particular. It's intriguing to consider, though, whether instructors' perspectives on digital literacy could differ at this point. Based on research conducted by Shafizan et al. (2021), youngsters of both genders acknowledged understanding the value of getting involved in digital innovation and content creation. This shows that people take digital and online endeavors more seriously, regardless of gender.

Digital literacy is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the ability to use digital technologies, devices, and online resources effectively. It involves not only basic computer skills but also critical thinking, information literacy, and the capability to navigate the complexities of the digital age. Similarly, McCarthy and Hendricks (2022) explained digital literacy to encompass the acquired knowledge and skills required to effectively use and navigate the digital world, which is increasingly becoming an essential aspect of education, employment, and economic participation. This shows that digital literacy equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively utilize digital tools and technologies to do work, solve problems, and possibly earn income for a living. This portrays the roles it plays in proficiently empowering people to utilize software applications, internet resources, and digital tools for communication, research, and problem-solving at workplaces. In a similar spirit, Raden et al. (2022) noted that the majority of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) owners have been using their digital marketing expertise to advertise their products and services on websites, social media platforms, and other media, thereby growing their clientele and generating more income. Poverty is threatened as more people experiment with the digital economy and make a living there.

Poverty is a persistent and diverse issue that affects millions of individuals in Nigeria's urban and rural areas. It is marked by unequal income distribution, a lack of access to needs, and a lack of economic opportunities. This may help to explain why poverty is viewed by Adejuwon and Tijani (2012) as a state of being impoverished. This could be demonstrated even despite an abundance of resources, as there might be stark poverty due to a lack of understanding about how to convert potential into useful, innovative advantages that promote well-being. On the other side, initiatives and coordinated efforts to lessen the incidence and effects of poverty are known as poverty alleviation. These endeavors cover a broad spectrum of projects, such as education, economic changes, and social welfare programs. In the context of this study, poverty alleviation involves understanding how digital literacy can be leveraged to create opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and improved living standards in Nigeria. Anekwe (2017) provided evidence to support this claim, arguing that investing in human capital through digital literacy and education raises living standards, strengthens the economy, and ends economic poverty because young people are now making a living by creating content for social media. Poverty in Nigeria, and Anambra State specifically, is seen to be lessened if the importance of digital literacy in reducing poverty is properly utilized.

Despite various initiatives and policies aimed at reducing poverty in Nigeria and Anambra State, a large segment of the population continues to face economic hardship. But, digital literacy, the ability to use and navigate digital technologies effectively, is viewed as a key factor in enhancing economic opportunities and access to information that could generate job opportunities. However, there is a gap in understanding how educators, specifically the Computer Science university lecturers at federal universities in Anambra State, perceive the significance of digital literacy in the poverty alleviation process. Orji (2023) noted that lecturers' viewpoints on the importance of digital literacy are indisputable because they can inform the choices that policymakers, educators, and development organizations make about incorporating digital literacy into educational programs and efforts to reduce poverty. Thus, this study aimed at investigating the perception of lecturers on the role of digital literacy in the alleviation of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.



Statement of the Problem

Understanding the perceptions of university lecturers is essential because they play a pivotal role in shaping the education system and influencing the curriculum. If they recognize and understand the significance of digital literacy in poverty alleviation, they are more likely to integrate relevant teaching and learning methods into their courses. This, in turn, can empower students with the skills and knowledge needed to address poverty-related challenges in Nigeria. But, given that there seems to be no literature, particularly on how academics in federal universities in Anambra State think digital education can help in remedying poverty in Nigeria and the State in particular, the problem of this study is presented in the question: what is the perception of lecturers on the role of digital literacy in the alleviation of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Research Question

The research question below served as the study's guide:

1. How can digital literacy contribute to Anambra State's efforts to reduce poverty?

Hypothesis

The study tested this null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male lecturers and female lecturers about how digital literacy is helping to alleviate poverty in Anambra State.

Method

The survey descriptive research design was adopted to provide the right blueprint for the study. The survey descriptive research design is considered one of the research design procedures in which a researcher administers a survey on a sample or to the entire population of people, known as respondents, to elicit relevant data that could help in describing and providing systematic explanations to the attitudes, opinions, behaviours and or characteristics of the population on a matter being studied (Tanny, 2018). The design is considered suitable and appropriate for the investigation because the study intends to collect data from a sample of computer science lecturers in the universities in Anambra State on matters relating to the role of digital literacy in the alleviation of poverty, using a structured questionnaire as the major instrument of the survey.

The population of the study is 80 lecturers of the Department of Computer Science in all 7 Universities in Anambra State. The population comprised 69 male lecturers and 11 female lecturers, while the universities were composed of 2 public universities and 5 private universities (source: Fieldwork, 26th September to 6th October, 2023). Lecturers from the Departments of Computer Science were considered more knowledgeable about digital education and how it can aid in alleviating poverty, hence their adoption as respondents in the investigation.

The sample size of 28 lecturers and 2 universities was drawn through the multistage procedure.

The multistage sampling process enables a researcher to use two or more sampling approaches to create a sample for a specific topic. The sample was composed of 24 male lecturers and 4 female lecturers. At first, the simple random by open balloting without replacement was used to draw 2-universities, and the results are Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (NAU or UNIZIK), and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU). This represents approximately 29% of the universities in Anambra State. Secondly, by purposive sampling, all 28 lecturers from the sampled universities were automatically adopted for the study. This also represents 35% of all the computer science lecturers in universities in Anambra State. Based on this, the sample size was considered appropriate for the study. This is in tandem with the recommendation made by St.



Otaf College (2021), that a minimum ratio of 30% can be drawn from a population below 1,000, and a minimum of 10% for a larger population of up to 10,000 respectively to ensure adequate representativeness.

A structured questionnaire, titled “Digital Literacy for Poverty Alleviation Questionnaire (DLPAQ)” was used for data collection. The instrument was developed based on a review of related literature and consultation with experts in Computer Science and ICT-related departments. The instrument has two sections, namely: Sections A and B. Section A focused on personal information of lecturers, such as gender (male or female) and varsity name (NAU or COOU). Section B has 10 items related to the role of digital literacy in the alleviation of poverty. It was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with weighted points: 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The face validation of the instrument (DLPAQ) was determined. To ascertain this, the researcher presented the title, research question, hypothesis, and copies of the questionnaire to three experts who are lecturers; one in the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement, Research and Measurement unit) and one in the Department of Computer Science, both from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The third lecturer was from the Department of Computer Science, at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. The experts were requested to examine and scrutinize the items in terms of contents, relevance, suitability, clarity, and coverage of the dimensions of the study. Their suggestions were used to draft the final (DLPAQ).

The data used for computing the reliability indices, 10 copies of the questionnaire were administered to a sample of 10 lecturers from universities in Enugu State whose courses in Computer Science are very similar to those in Anambra State. Cronbach alpha was used to compute the collected data. Cronbach alpha was considered appropriate to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. Thus, the researcher considered the instrument to be reliable for the study. This is in line with Nworgu (2015) who recommended that a co-efficient value of 0.60 and above is adequate for any research work.

The researcher, together with 1-research assistant collected relevant data from respondents through the direct approach. Extra questionnaires were produced and set aside to replace any possible loss. This ensured that 28 copies were administered and completely retrieved, showing 100% retrieval of fully responded copies of the questionnaire.

The data was analyzed using arithmetic mean for the research questions and t-test for the hypothesis testing. In answering the research question, a mean rating that falls below 2.50 was taken as disagreement, and any mean rating of 2.50 or above was taken to indicate agreement. In testing the null hypothesis, if t-calculated was equal to or greater than t-critical at 0.05 levels of significance and the appropriate degree of freedom, the hypothesis is considered significant and the null hypothesis rejected, but if otherwise, the null hypothesis was to be accepted.

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

Research Question 1: How is digital literacy helping to alleviate poverty in Anambra State?

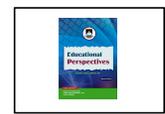


Table 1

Mean rating of male lecturers and female lecturers with regard to how digital literacy is helping to alleviate poverty in Anambra State.

S/N	From all indications, I think digital literacy helps in alleviating poverty by:	Male Lecturers (n=24)		Female Lecturers (n=4)	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
1.	Empowering people with digital knowledge and skills leads to them becoming content creators on Youtube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X, and similar social media	3.02	Agree	3.00	Agree
2.	Equipping people with digital competencies leads to them becoming online facilitators	2.82	Agree	2.90	Agree
3.	Empowering people with relevant health skills and proficiency leading to them becoming digital health providers	3.00	Agree	2.90	Agree
4.	Acquainting people with expertise leading to them becoming professional Bloggers	2.79	Agree	2.76	Agree
5.	Preparing people with digital competencies leading to them being gainfully employed by firms in the digital economy	2.93	Agree	2.85	Agree
6	Equipping people with all the competencies leading to them becoming Freelancers and E-Researchers	2.87	Agree	2.96	Agree
7	Enabling people with digital content leads to them becoming emerging technology enthusiasts (exploiting the gains in emerging technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things, Analytics, etc.).	2.95	Agree	2.87	Agree
8	Empowering people with digital knowledge and skills leading to them becoming Digital Technologists	3.00	Agree	2.98	Agree
9	Enabling people with relevant digital competencies to take up ventures in E-Commerce	3.01	Agree	2.99	Agree
10	Equipping people with agro-digital knowledge and skills leading them into E-agricultural ventures	3.07	Agree	2.90	Agree
Cluster Mean		2.95	Agree	2.91	Agree

From Table 1, it is seen that the mean ratings of all the individual questionnaire items for both the male and female lecturers are greater than 2.50 (the benchmark for accepting a proposed item). It could also be seen from the table that the cluster mean ratings for the male lecturers (2.95) and the female lecturers (2.91) are greater than 2.50. This implies that all the proposed research items are accepted as the various ways through which digital literacy helps to reduce poverty in Anambra State. This means that digital literacy empowers people with the required knowledge, skills, and competencies to become gainfully employed in reputable



firms in the digital economy, and or become ‘Digipreneurs’ (E-Commerce, E-Agriculture, etc.), content creators (Youtube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X, and similar social media), Freelancers, Digital Technologists, Online Tutors and Facilitators, Bloggers, and emerging technology enthusiasts (exploiting the gains in emerging technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things, Analytics, etc.)). It is further understood from Table 1 that the difference between the cluster mean ratings of 2.95 for male lecturers and 2.91 for female lecturers is 0.04.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis i: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male lecturers and female lecturers about how digital literacy is helping to alleviate poverty in Anambra State.

Table 2

T-test for mean ratings of male lecturers and female lecturers about how digital literacy is helping to alleviate poverty in Anambra State.

Variables	N	X	SD	t-crit	t-cal	DF	α	Remark
Male								
Lecturers	24	2.95	0.86	2.056	1.86	26	0.05	Not rejected
Female								
Lecturers	4	2.91	0.91					

A look at Table 2 shows that the t-critical is 2.056, and the t-calculated is 1.86 at 26 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the t-critical value (2.056) is greater than the t-calculated value (1.86), meaning that the null hypothesis is not being rejected. This implies that the mean rating of male lecturers and female lecturers of the Federal Universities in Anambra State concerning how digital literacy is helping to alleviate poverty is not significantly different.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study as revealed from Table 1 that the role of digital literacy in alleviating poverty in Anambra State include: empowering people with digital knowledge and skills leading to them becoming content creators on Youtube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X, and similar social media; equipping people with digital competences leading to them becoming online facilitators; empowering people with relevant health skills and proficiency leading to them becoming digital health providers; acquainting people with expertise leading to them becoming professional Bloggers; preparing people with digital competences leading to them being gainfully employed by firms in the digital economy; equipping people with all the competences leading to them becoming Freelancers and E-Researchers; enabling people with digital contents leading to them becoming emerging technology enthusiasts (exploiting the gains in emerging technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things, Analytics, etc.)); empowering people with digital knowledge and skills leading to them becoming Digital Technologists; enabling people with relevant digital competences to take up ventures in E-Commerce and FinTech, and equipping people with agro-digital knowledge and skills leading them into E-agricultural ventures.

Similar to the finding of this study, was the investigation carried out by Raden et al. (2022) which reported that most MSME business people have been using digital marketing to promote their businesses and services through media social media or website, increasing their popularity and sales and revenue generation. Raden et al. (2022) further argued that knowledge and skills of digital technology have liberated a lot of young



people financially, as a lot of them make a living by engaging in different online ventures. In the same vein, Anekwe (2017) pointed out that investment in human capital through digital literacy and education helps to strengthen the economy, raise the standard of living, and remove economic poverty in the lives of the people, as young people now engage in content creation on social media for a living. This may help to explain the belief that a nation's educational system and society must prioritize the acquisition of information, people, and material resources that facilitate efficient training, networking, experience, and learning in order to develop its human capital development and bring about stable economic growth and national development (Ubabudu & Basharu,2022).

The study further found that the mean rating of male lecturers and female lecturers of the Federal Universities in Anambra State concerning how digital literacy is helping to alleviate poverty is not significantly different. In the study conducted by Shafizan et al. (2021), it was reported that children, irrespective of gender admitted to being aware of communication skills; like to participate in content creation and digital innovation, and hope that security threats in online operations be curbed. It is understandable from the foregoing, that both males and females seem to take digital and online ventures more seriously, as it has become the common way of remaining relevant, economically and socially.

Conclusion

The researcher draws the admirable conclusion that digital literacy contributes to the reduction of poverty following the study's findings. The views of both male and female instructors regarding the positive contribution of digital literacy to poverty reduction were in agreement. In any community that uses digital literacy properly, it is essentially a constructive tool for treating the illness of want and lack. The more Nigeria and Anambra State specifically promote digital literacy, the more likely it is that its citizens' and residents' poverty status will decline.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher advocates that:

1. Government should collaborate with different stakeholders in the digital economy to train and equip more people with the relevant knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences needed to be successful in the field. This will boost the capacity building and adequacy of digital specialists and professionals who will keep having significant effects on the economy.
2. There should be a law and policies, making it compulsory for every child and people of working age, whether in the formal education setting or not, to be trained and prepared to exploit the opportunities in the digital world. In doing this, no citizen or resident will be left handicapped, digitally speaking. When this is put in place and strategically implemented, people will become adequately empowered to use such knowledge and skills for commercial purposes, and by so doing continue to earn a living from it. This will undoubtedly curb poverty in the future of Anambra State and Nigeria.



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