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Effect of Social Practice Approach on Academic Achievement of Adult Learners in Basic Literacy

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ABSTRACT

The challenge of low academic achievement among adult learners has been continuously reported in adult basic literacy. Therefore, the present study was conducted to empirically determine the effect of the social practice approach on learners' academic achievement through a quasi-experimental group design. There were 70 learners, with 35 assigned to each experimental and control group. A worksheet (pre-test/post-test) was employed for data collection. Data were analyzed by using an independent sample t-test. The findings revealed that the experimental group, exposed to the social practice approach in their literacy activities, showed improved academic achievement in knowledge, comprehension, and application as compared to the control group. The study put forth recommendations; conducting learners' need assessment before literacy content development to align with identified social needs, offering context-based literacy training for teachers, especially in lesson planning, and implementing virtual and physical feedback mechanisms to gather input from learners to enhance adult basic literacy consistently.

Keywords: Social practice approach, Social context, Academic achievement, Adult learners, Basic literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has seen widespread recognition of literacy as an essential ability, especially for adult learners, who can use it to understand its advantages and exercise their agency in pursuing their social objectives (Larsen et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Adult basic literacy is defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019) as the development of life skills that enable learners to be contributing members of their families, active citizens, and productive workers, encouraging their full involvement in society. Simultaneously, learners' academic achievement is critical to how sound literacy initiatives work (Aroge & Olaniyi, 2020).

Learners' persistently low academic attainment is a significant global barrier to adult literacy (Bano et al., 2019). An increasing number of countries are looking into and implementing a wide range of literacy initiatives and programs to increase adult learners' participation in adult basic literacy programs due to the need to address this issue receiving worldwide attention. Scholarly

investigations on this area have been conducted more frequently, as demonstrated by the work of researchers Byrnes (2021), Courtney (2019), and Yitayew (2018). The results of all these researches pointed to the pressing need to address the issue of adult basic literacy learners' low academic achievement.

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Many studies (Iqbal et al., 2018; Kayani, 2019; Khizar, 2020) conducted in Pakistan have shown that low academic achievement in adult literacy is caused by a variety of socio-cultural barriers in addition to financial difficulties. These barriers include people's lack of interest in and awareness of literacy practices because most believe literacy will either destroy their social and moral values or not provide any benefits in the long run. In addition, the yearly reports from international organizations (JICA, 2022; UNESCO, 2022; USAID, 2020) also emphasized that the primary cause of the low literacy rate is now learners' low academic achievement (Smith et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2019). Social values must be incorporated into literacy practices to motivate people to read for sustainable development in Pakistan and to

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effect positive change. According to the National Report of Pakistan (2022), social context-based content is essential for enhancing adult learners' abilities and the standard of literacy practices.

Adult learners in Pakistan frequently accomplish academically at an insufficient level needs to be improved, mainly because they encounter significant obstacles when attempting to apply the academic abilities they have acquired to everyday situations (Kayani, 2019). Even while these learners succeed academically in the classroom, it has yet to be discovered how these skills will be used outside the classroom (Belzer & Grotluschen, 2022). Many of them need help to see how the knowledge they have learned in the classroom can be used in practical settings, discouraging them and making it more difficult for them to sustain their abilities over time. This disconnect between what is learned in the classroom and how it is implemented in real life substantially impacts academic progress.

According to the UNESCO annual report (2019), adult literacy programs need to be revised to more fluidly integrate academic skills into daily life to successfully address the issue of low academic achievement among adult learners in Pakistan. The curriculum must be reorganized to incorporate practical exercises and realworld scenarios that let learners apply what they've learned to everyday situations. Giving adult learners ongoing encouragement and assistance as they attempt to integrate their academic knowledge into their everyday activities is also a critical part of this transformation. It is possible to improve adult learners' academic achievement in Pakistan by strengthening the connection between classroom learning and real-world application. Ensure that the knowledge they have gained is used practically and theoretically, increasing their sense of empowerment and long-term prosperity.

These days, however, literacy is seen from a social perspective, which means that learning should begin and end with the everyday activities of any given community. The social method has been tried in adult literacy programs across the globe (Levican & Garrido, 2022). The notion that literacy is what individuals do with reading and writing in real-world circumstances and why they do it forms the basis of ideas on literacy as a social practice. Burnett and Merchant's (2020) research revealed that the social practice method empowers learners to reach their objectives. From the standpoint of the social practice perspective on literacy instruction, the

learning process places importance on individuals' diverse life experiences encountered in everyday life.

To motivate adult learners to learn and become more valuable members of society, the social practice approach to literacy integrates learners' social surroundings into literacy practices (Courtney, 2019). Adult learners must recognize the advantages that learning to read and write could have in their everyday lives. For adult learners, the question is whether or not literacy can make it easier for them to find more efficient solutions to challenges in their daily lives. As such, adult literacy cannot be understood solely in terms of acquiring a predefined set of abilities. According to ethnographic studies (Kearsley, 2019; Street, 2018), everyone in society engages in literacy practices in different ways, and they may not even recognize them as literacy practices; therefore, it is impossible to categorize everyone as literate or illiterate (Killian et al., 2021).

According to the results of previous research in this area (Courtney, 2019; Grajo, Gutman & Gelb, 2020), adults become more motivated and passionate about learning when literacy is connected to their daily activities. Examples of such activities include reading for pleasure and using words and numbers to complete daily tasks successfully. Literacy skills are necessary to help learners complete their daily chores effectively and independently (Kearsley, 2019; Killian et al., 2021). These literacy exercises must address life's social, cultural, and economic facets. Combined, these can improve and enrich learners' learning experiences and give them more opportunities significant to make contributions to the long-term growth of any community. Recent research conducted in Pakistan (Abid, Ali, & Ali, 2021; Kayani, 2019; Razzaq, 2019) has shown that adult basic literacy lacks social context, which improves learners' academic progress. The target group of learners' motivation for academic success is tempered by the adult basic literacy irrelevant to their social situation. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to empirically seek the effect of the social practice approach to improve the academic achievement of adult learners in basic literacy.

Study Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- 1. To check the effect of values-embedded life skills on the knowledge of adult learners.
- 2. To measure the effect of values embedded in life skills on the comprehension of adult learners.

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3. To assess the effect of values-embedded life skills on the application of adult learners.

HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses related to the objective of the study were made:

- *H*1: There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' pre-test and posttest mean scores related to knowledge.
- *H*2: There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' pre-test and posttest mean scores related to comprehension.
- *H*3: There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' pre-test and posttest mean scores related to the application.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Lave's (1991) social practice theory, learning is fundamentally a social activity that is deeply woven into everyday life. In the area of basic literacy, this idea proposes that adult learners can greatly increase their academic accomplishment by assiduously incorporating reading practices into the social activities and routines that make up their daily lives. Nkrumah (2017) highlighted the importance of values in education because they are the mental manifestations of people's needs and wants. On the other hand, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and Grube et al. (1994) argued that social values can really improve learning motivation and cognitive performance. When learners have a positive perception of the material, their academic achievement is increased. Learners are encouraged to assume responsibility and show interest in the learning process through these behaviors. Since learning is a social activity and social responsibility is abstracted from learning, learners are more motivated when learning is relevant to their lives and responsibilities (Scribner & Cole 1978). Adults' interests and abilities must, therefore, be taken into account during the learning process in order for them to apply what they have learned to society effectively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The foundational philosophy of this research was grounded in positivism, focusing on the empirical examination of the effect of values-embedded life skills on the academic achievement of adult learners (Creswell, 2018). Employing a quantitative approach, the investigation adhered to a quasi-experimental design to systematically, a) identify trends and potential

differences through the experimental procedure and b) to underscore the objective measurement and statistical analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The overall research design was given as follows:

N1	01	X	02
N2	01	С	02

N1 (Experimental group), N2 (Control group), O1 (pretest), X (Treatment to the experimental group), C (Use of traditional method), O2 (post-test)

Population and Sample of the Study

Two groups were selected from the Rawalpindi district out of 14 literacy centers. In the adult literacy centers (ALC), both the experimental and control groups consisted of intact groups, each comprising 35 learners. The use of intact groups provided control over the confounding variables to ensure unbiased and geographically representative sampling. The literacy department opened literacy centers in different parts of Punjab at different times. The reason behind the selection of Rawalpindi district as the population of the present study was when the study was conducted, literacy centers were only functioning in Rawalpindi.

Instrument of the Study

A worksheet was used as a pre-test and post-test for both groups, based on pictures/diagrams, as most of the learners in adult literacy (Mitchell & Malladi, 2010; Paddick et al., 2017). The worksheet aimed to create a medium through which these individuals could grasp concepts and ideas more intuitively. It consisted of items to reflect literacy content under the cognitive domain, which was further categorized into three including knowledge, comprehension, and application (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). There were 118 items in the worksheet from 6 units of literacy book. The distribution of test items was made as given in table 1. This framework was devised as per literacy content and SLOs of Punjab Literacy Department national curricula. The incorporation of knowledge-based questions was based on identification, matching, encircling, labeling, and sequencing elements and things. The comprehension questions, particularly those requiring the identification of the correct answers, categorizing, locating, and interpreting. The domain involved the application of

literacy concepts and skills in a range of different routine

tasks, e.g., calculations, writing words, measurements,

demonstration, and problem solving.

Tabele 1. Categorization of Worksheet in Learning Domains

Chapter	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Total
1	5	5	3	13
2	5	11	5	21
3	3	9	10	22
4	3	8	6	17
5	7	5	7	19
6	6	10	10	26
Total	29	48	14	118

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

In order to validate the instruments and find questions pertaining to literacy content, the content validity index was computed (Davis, 1992). For this reason, five literacy specialists with at least five years of professional experience were requested to classify each question in the following way: 1 (not relevant), 2 (slightly significant), 3 (quite relevant), and 4 (highly relevant). The resulting content validity values were 0.87 for knowledge, 0.84 for comprehension, and 0.88 for application. To assess the internal consistency of items in the worksheet, Cronbach's alpha was computed. For this purpose, 24 learners (eight from each center) were selected from three literacy centers of Rawalpindi district without including them in an actual sample of the study.

Intervention Procedure

Lesson planning related to life skills was done in such a way by embedding social and moral values. There were 24 lesson plans in total, covering various aspects of the six life skills sections. The lesson plans were created with sixty minutes in time duration (CASEL, 2021). For literacy, the teacher and training guides were created. Two weeks of training were given to the literacy teacher of the experimental group on how to apply instructional strategies in the classroom. The worksheet was provided to the learners in the first month of the literacy session in order to gauge their previous literacy level. This first assessment functioned as a baseline measurement, giving information about the learners' starting position and current achievement levels. The same worksheet was given to learners to assess their degree of academic achievement after four months. This period gave the learners enough time to process, rehearse, and use the reading skills in their social settings (Creswell, 2018; Hall, 2013). The learners were allowed two (2) hours to complete it. There was one mark given for every right response.

Data Analysis

Utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), an independent-sample t-test was conducted to assess the mean disparity between the experimental and control groups. The calculated p-value was compared with a predetermined significance level (alpha, α) to assess statistical significance. The evaluation of experimental results hinged on this comparison, and endorsement of the alternative hypothesis occurred when the p-value fell below the alpha threshold (<0.05). This outcome indicated a statistically significant mean distinction between the groups, providing a basis for meaningful conclusions from the analysis.

RESULTS

A thorough analysis that enables an in-depth look at the performance and learning outcomes in these particular cognitive domains as given in table 2, illuminating how the study or intervention affected the learners' abilities to acquire, comprehend, and apply knowledge practically. The three areas of focus were knowledge, comprehension, and application. The knowledge pre-test results, to start, show that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups. The experimental and control groups have comparable average mean scores, with the former group scoring 7.80 and the latter group scoring 9.00. This suggests that the knowledge levels of both groups were similar before any intervention. An interesting difference between the groups is subsequently shown by the study of the knowledge post-test findings. The experimental group's mean post-test score of 23.08 is noticeably greater than the control group's mean score of 8.31. It is evident that there was a substantial difference in knowledge development between the experimental and control groups, with a p-value of .000.

Table 2. Comparison of Experimental & Control Groups in Academic Achievement

Domain	Test	N	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	P
	Pre	35	Experimental	7.80	2.82	-1.72	68	.088
77 1 1	rie	35	Control	9.00	2.98	-1./2		
Knowledge	Doot	35	Experimental	23.08	1.91	26.00	65	.000
	Post	35	Control	8.31	2.56	26.89		
Comprehension	Pre	35	Experimental	14.94	2.80	1.04	68	.302
	rie	35	Control	14.34	1.9	1.04		
	D.	35	Experimental	30.31	1.49	27.50	65	.000
	Post	35	Control	14.89	2.93	27.58		
Application	D	35	Experimental	6.82	3.45	100	68	.843
	Pre	35	Control	7.00	3.77	198		
	ъ.	35	Experimental	36.00	2.24	24.22	65	.000
	Post	35	Control	10.90	4.16	31.23		

Again, there is no appreciable difference between the two groups' pre-test results with regard to the comprehension component. The experimental group's pre-test mean score is 14.94, while the control group's is 14.34. This suggests that the levels of understanding of both groups were similar before any intervention. When comparing the comprehension post-test scores, there is a discernible difference. The experimental group outperformed the control group, which had a mean score of 14.89 on the post-test, with a mean score of 30.31. When compared to the control group, a p-value of .000 shows the presence of a significant difference, indicating that the experimental group's intervention was successful in increasing knowledge.

According to the application aspect analysis, there is no significant difference between the two groups' pre-test findings. The experimental group's pre-test mean score is 6.82, while the control group's is 7.00. The scores' indication that both groups had similar application-related knowledge before any intervention is supported by the non-significant p-value of .843. On the other hand, the application post-test findings reveal a significant and noteworthy difference between the two groups. The experimental group's mean post-test score is 36.00, which is significantly higher than the control group's mean score of 10.90. The enormous t-value of 31.23 and the p-value of .000 show that the experimental group's application skills considerably improved as compared to the control group.

Based on the data analysis from Table 2, the experimental intervention resulted in a substantial improvement in the

knowledge, comprehension, and application of the experimental group compared to the control group. Although the groups' pre-test and post-test scores did not initially change, it is clear from the latter that the experimental intervention was effective in raising the quality of these instructional components.

Table 3 presents a comprehensive analysis of the combined pre-test and post-test results for the experimental and control groups. This table offers a comprehensive analysis that makes it possible to compare the performance of these two groups before and after the study or intervention in terms of their overall academic achievement. The pre-test and post-test results for the experimental group, in particular, indicate a notable and statistically significant shift. The mean pretest score for this group is 29.68, and the post-test score rises to 89.40, a considerable increase. On the other hand, the control group's pre-test and post-test results present a different picture. Their somewhat higher mean pre-test score of 30.48 actually decreases to 33.87 on the posttest, although this shift is not statistically significant. The experimental group showed a noteworthy and statistically significant shift in pre-test to post-test scores, signifying substantial improvement. In contrast, the control group exhibited a less pronounced change, with a slightly higher mean pre-test score decreasing to a posttest score, although this shift lacked statistical significance.

These results indicated the effect of social practice approach in endorsing significant improvement in experimental group.

Table 3. Overall Comparison	of Experimental &	& Control groups in Academic Achievemen	ıt
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Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	р
Duo	Experimental	35	29.68	5.74	578	68	.565
Pre	Control	35	30.48	5.83	5/8	00	.505
Doot	Experimental	35	89.40	3.56	1111	(C	000
Post	Control	35	33.87	6.38	44.44	65	.000

These findings suggest that the control group's scores did not significantly improve between the pre-test and posttest. The learners' post-test scores showed a considerable improvement when compared to their pre-test scores, indicating that the intervention had a noteworthy impact on their academic achievement. Based on statistical analysis with an alpha value of less than 0.05, the demonstrated experimental group significant improvements in three academic achievement factors: knowledge, comprehension, and application. The results showed a notable and significant improvement in the learners' academic achievement. Therefore, alternative hypotheses were accepted related to three factors knowledge, comprehension and application.

Table 4. Acceptance and rejection of hypotheses

Academic	P-value	H1	
achievement	P-value	пі	
Knowledge	< 0.05	Accepted	
Comprehension	< 0.05	Accepted	
Application	< 0.05	Accepted	

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It was found that, before the intervention, the pre-test results for knowledge, comprehension, and application were nearly identical for both groups. The post-test results, however, showed a notable disparity in the two groups' mean scores concerning application, comprehension, and knowledge. This suggested that there had been a notable improvement in the academic achievement of the learners in the experimental group. The study's conclusions emphasized how crucial it is to incorporate learner-centered, contextually relevant literacy content, as doing so can significantly boost learners' interest in literacy classes, attendance rates, and academic success. The moral and social ideals that underpin literacy activities are the basis for their importance.

This implies that the intervention group outperformed

the control group because it used a more thorough and sociocultural relevant approach. This suggests that in a learning environment that actively engages learners and adopts a learner-centric approach, learners' academic achievement can be significantly boosted. Notably, these findings align with recent studies (Merrill & Gonser, 2021; Parker, Thomsen, & Berry, 2022).

The enhanced academic achievement of learners who received the intervention is indicative of the usefulness of literacy activities in everyday life. The present study's findings align with other research (Hadianto et al., 2022; Gamage, Dehideniya & Ekanayake, 2021; Kolawole & Pusoetsile, 2022) that underscores the benefits of education that have immediate applications to the personal and professional spheres of learners. Based on the previously mentioned research, learners' academic achievement is also greatly impacted by the social values that are deeply embedded in the educational process.

In the end, the study supported the importance of a social context viewpoint on literacy learning, which raises learners' academic achievement. It emphasized the significance of incorporating moral and social values into adult literacy programs in order to create deep links between classroom instruction and real-world experiences. An important difference in the application dimension between the experimental and control groups ascribed to the richer learning environment created by adding a social context perspective. After being exposed to adult literacy programs that were instilled with moral and social values, the experimental group demonstrated an enhanced capacity to utilize their newly learned reading abilities in genuine, real-world scenarios. This result emphasizes how crucial it is to have a comprehensive educational framework that goes beyond conventional classroom walls. This study supported the idea that promoting a profound and meaningful relationship requires an inclusive, socially rooted

Prior studies have demonstrated that integrating these

values enhances adult learners' learning outcomes (Hammond et al., 2020; Ibe & Abamuche, 2019; Yeh, 2022). In summary, there is strong evidence in this study to support the reform of adult literacy instruction. It encourages a shift in adult literacy instruction from traditional teaching methods to a context-based approach to everyday life to raise learners' academic achievement. This method creates authentic learning experiences that appeal to adult learners, raising their motivation, engagement, and general performance. These insights should guide educators and policymakers as they design and implement adult literacy programs that address learners' urgent needs and help them thrive in their personal and professional lives. By embracing these ideas, lifelong learning can be truly promoted, which will enable adult learners throughout society and result in significant self-empowerment by stressing the need for social context relevance in creating engaging and meaningful learning opportunities for adult learners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the critical importance of incorporating moral and social values into adult literacy. It is clear that these incorporated life skills have a greater effect on adult learners' academic achievement than the current method of teaching literacy subjects. This emphasizes how crucial it is to provide educational interventions that connect with learners' real-world experiences in order to improve their learning outcomes and overall experience.

The data overwhelmingly supports a social practice approach that provides chances for experiential learning, fosters social contact, and aligns adult literacy practices with adult learners' everyday lives. Adult learners' academic achievement can significantly improve with the use of such an approach. These realizations provide teachers and legislators with direction, inspiring them to create and administer adult literacy initiatives that meet learners' immediate needs while also enabling them to succeed in both their personal and professional lives. Adopting these ideas will enable adult learners to truly empower themselves and promote lifelong learning, which will benefit society as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, some practical suggestions were offered below:

- a) Recognizing and meeting these learners' specific needs is essential to improving academic achievement in adult literacy programs. Adult literacy providers should learn more about the unique needs and goals of their learners by carrying out a thorough needs assessment. By using this information, teachers should modify literacy practices especially lesson plans to better-fit adult learners' daily tasks and lived experiences. This creates a more engaging and productive learning environment.
- b) Teachers need to be encouraged to work within the new framework in order to establish a supportive learning environment that encourages the growth of moral and social values. In order to connect with learners' experiences and make learning more relevant, they need to incorporate interactive and engaging hands-on activities, group discussions, reallife scenarios, and the development of lesson plans. Practical life skills training should include decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking, and talks on morals, values, and social responsibilities essential for adult learners in their daily lives.
- c) Potential teachers need to see this as an attractive career with good status, support, and remuneration. The courses need to be resourced adequately with the provision of multimedia, interactive materials, and real-life scenarios. This will cater to a variety of learning styles.
- d)Ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum can be achieved by creating an assessment and evaluation system that determines how closely literacy practices relate to learners' everyday lives. This should involve evaluations that gauge how well the curriculum satisfies the needs and interests of the learners, as well as assessments that gauge how well the literacy skills, they are learning are applied in the real world. As an extra, online and in-person feedback channel should be offered to get useful insights into the successes of any program or what needs to be improved.

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