

LITERACY AS INDEX OF SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: WHAT ARE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCHOOL LIBRARY?

IBITOLA OLUWATOYIN ADIGUN
Department of School Library and Media Technology,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
io.adigun@mail1.ui.edu.ng/oloriadigun@gmail.com
preciousft2002@yahoo.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1296-3512>

&

KOLAWOLE AKINJIDE ARAMIDE
Department of School Library and Media Technology,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
aramidekolawole1@gmail.com; kolaakinjide@gmail.com; ka.aramide@ui.edu.ng
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9949-8712>

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of literacy on socio-economic development with a focus on the contributions of school libraries towards increasing the literacy level. The paper is a review of existing literature on literacy and socio-economic development and the contributions of school libraries to literacy development and other related documents. The purpose is to establish whether literacy rate determines the level of socioeconomic development or not and to highlight the role which libraries play in literacy acquisition. The qualitative research approach involving the content analysis of secondary sources of information including journals, books, lecture series, proceedings of conferences, and other documentary evidence was adopted as methodology. Findings revealed that a country's socio-economic development level is determined by its citizens' literacy rate. It also showed that libraries enhance literacy development through the provision of access to learning resources. Based on the findings the study recommended that efforts should be made by the government to increase the rate of literacy, especially through the establishment and funding of libraries.

Keywords: *Literacy, socioeconomic, development, school library contributions*

Introduction

Literacy is an important factor in human development because of its unique role in acquiring knowledge. Literacy is the gateway to knowledge without which development in any sphere of human development could be slowed down or unattainable. Literacy is particularly important in the socioeconomic growth and development of individuals and a nation. Literacy has been given various definitions, Tavdgiridze (2016) defined literacy as different kinds of skills such as reading, writing, information processing, ideas and opinions generation, decision-making, and problem-solving. This definition shows the importance of literacy in individuals' ability to reason and make appropriate decisions for the development of such individuals. The ability of individuals to reason and make appropriate decisions could translate to the development of a nation. Begum (2020) explained literacy as dynamic content that goes beyond the ability to read and write printed text. According to the researcher, literacy ability helps an individual in making the right decision in other areas of life including health, communication, education, economy, and more. The critical role literacy plays in human and societal development is reported by Church (2018) in the definition of literacy as the outcome of a complex relationship of connected skills working in cooperation to increase understanding of the world. The implication of the definition is that literacy is crucial to the ability of an individual to have a clear understanding of the world. The present age is the information technology age, and sourcing information becomes easy with literacy ability. Literacy empowers an

individual to source information on various media, thus moving the individual a step further to possessing information literacy skills.

Information literacy skill is built on literacy ability thus making literacy a requisite for information literacy. Information literacy is defined as the ability to find, evaluate, and use information efficiently, effectively, and ethically to answer an information need, and the ability to know when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it with ethical consideration (Naik & Padmini, 2014). Information literacy is crucial to human existence to the extent that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identified it as a potential solution to various global challenges (Julien, 2016). In the same vein, it could be difficult to separate economic development from information literacy because the ability to advance an economy rests on the ability to source, evaluate and utilise economic information to the advantage of individuals and society.

Meanwhile, it takes literacy ability to understand the concept of socioeconomic development and information literacy to acquire knowledge on propelling it. Understanding the concept of socioeconomic development begins with understanding development as a change that results in improvement.

Socioeconomic development could be described as a two-way concept because, in the opinion of Rublev et al. (2021), society impacts individuals as individuals on the other hand equally impact society by influencing it through quantitative and qualitative changes. In simple terms, the socioeconomic development of society has impacts on individuals as individuals influence the quantity and quality of socioeconomic development that takes place in society. Thus, the explanation of socioeconomic development by Litwiński (2017) could be summarised as the process of social and economic development measured by indicators such as gross domestic product, life expectancy, literacy, and employment rate.

Literacy development begins with the foundation of individuals from the home through elementary schools. The literacy foundation laid through literacy socialisation provided the foundation for the laying of building blocks of literacy development and acquisition at other levels of education and society. Consequently, the role of the school library within the context of literacy development cannot be overemphasised. As literacy impacts socioeconomic development, the school library also impacts literacy acquisition. Church (2018) asserted that the school library enables students to find their voices in society as they have limitless access to library resources. The reason is that the school library is a resource centre that provides access to the needed resources that aid literacy acquisition which consequently impacts socioeconomic development, thus library and literacy are factors to be considered in socioeconomic development.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to examine the impact of literacy on socioeconomic development; and the role of school libraries in the acquisition of literacy for socioeconomic development.

Literature review

Literacy and socioeconomic development

The importance of literacy to the overall development of a nation cannot be overemphasised because of its impact on every aspect of a individuals lifes and the nation. Literature has established that literacy is the bedrock of the economic development of a nation because it is the most important skill pertinent to the future of a child and a democratic and prosperous society (Wilson, 2016). Also, literacy could be significant to information literacy development because without it, accessing analysing, and utilizing information to the benefit of a nation could be a difficult task to accomplish. Understanding the importance of literacy and information literacy to socio-economic development could propel stakeholders to undertake policies and programmes that will increase the literacy rate, resulting in socio-economic development. Similarly, understanding the concept of information literacy and socio-economic development could awaken individuals in a nation to take steps that would positively impact their information capabilities and place them on a pedestal in society.

Montoya (2018) presented some definitions of literacy according to some international organisations. For instance, the European Literacy Policy Network (OECD) defined literacy as the ability to read and write at a level where individuals can understand and use written communication in all media effectively. The definition brought to the fore the importance of literacy as an essential tool in achieving effective communication. Literacy is also defined by the OECD as understanding, evaluating, using, and engaging with written text to participate in society, achieve goals and develop knowledge and potential. Van Pelt (2018) reported a statement credited to a former president of America, Bill Clinton stating that the energy and creativity of all citizens of a country must be harnessed through increased literacy if the challenges of the 21st century will be met. This statement points clearly to the fact that a nation's power of development lies in its citizens' literacy level.

While emphasizing the importance of literacy, Church (2018) averred that literacy in addition to contributing to personal development, learning, and success in school and life, empowers individuals to participate actively in society. Thus, underestimating the power of literacy could be underestimating the power of both national and international development. A report by UNESCO also gave credence to literacy as a driver for sustainable development because of its role in enabling individuals' greater participation in the labour market. The report further stated that literacy expands life opportunities, reduces poverty, and improves child and family health and nutrition. This could simply be interpreted to imply that literacy affects every aspect of human life. In recent literature, Begum (2020) asserted that literacy contributes to economic growth through the reduction of poverty and crime; promotion of democracy; increasing civic engagement; prevention of diseases through health information; enhancement of cultural diversity through literacy programmes; reduction in birth rates resulting from increased education; and increased self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment.

Looking at what illiteracy or low literacy and/or lack of literacy cost the global economy which was estimated at 1.2 trillion dollars and that of the United States which was above 300 billion dollars annually, Van Pelt (2018) submitted that literacy is the foundation of community and economic development. A more recent study on adult literacy in the U.S. reported by Nietzel (2020) indicated an alarming figure of 2.2 trillion dollars annually as the cost of illiteracy in the country. By implication according to this report, 10% of the gross domestic product of the U.S. is lost to illiteracy annually. In simple terms, an increase in literacy rate would result in a corresponding increase in economic development. Anecdotal evidence has also shown that literacy equips individuals with the skills and intelligence needed to make wise investment decisions that could result in the economic growth of a nation. Javed et al. (2021) while stating the impact of literacy on the economy cited China and India as having 80% and 74% literacy rates respectively, and according to the researcher, these are the countries ruling the global economy, especially in terms of technological advancement.

The positions occupied by both China and India have further confirmed the important role of literacy in the technological advancement of any country. The reason is that literacy is a basic requirement for information literacy. Zua (2021) posited that various literacies are needed by individuals to function and participate actively in contemporary society. However, each of the other literacies could only be developed when an individual possesses basic literacy skills. By implication, it could be difficult for an individual to possess critical literacy, computer literacy, information literacy, and visual literacy skills if the individual lacks basic literacy skills in reading and writing. The importance of literacy to the development of information literacy skills was also reiterated by Khumalo (2019) who reported that evidence has shown that literacy improves an individual's productivity in their chosen career and also increases income and quality of human capital in a country. Literacy transcends the ability to read and write, Arce (2018) noted that it includes the cognitive ability to make informed decisions when participating in civic engagement and community activities. The ability could widen an individual's capability in assessing information critically taking into cognizance the long and short-term consequences of employing such information in decision making.

Human capital has been affirmed to be an important propeller of any economy as the literacy level of individuals has also been affirmed as a determinant of human abilities to learn and adapt to organizational changes as well as changes in the labour market. According to a report by the World Literacy Foundation (2018), individuals without literacy ability are trapped in a cycle of poverty and unemployment due to limited employment opportunities occasioned by their restricted literacy ability. The productivity of individuals would also result in increased productivity of a nation since a nation is made up of individuals. Meanwhile, the ability to participate meaningfully in a society is dependent on the level of literacy of individuals. In a study on the socioeconomic status of women in Sierra Leone, Quayee (2021) reported the inability of many women to contribute to the political and economic development of the country as a result of their illiteracy. Inadvertently, the inability of such women to contribute to the economy of the country would be a disadvantage to them and also to the economy of their country. Similar reports exist in some other nations of Africa, and this could be responsible for the perpetual underdevelopment of many countries in Africa.

According to Zua (2021), countries such as Central Africa Republic, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and South Sudan have literacy rates below 40%. This calls for concern because as Bill Clinton said, literacy is a necessity, not a luxury (Van Pelt, 2018). While making a case for the importance of literacy on the economy, Johnston (2004) argued that people with better literacy skills are more likely to be in the workforce; they can do their jobs more effectively with less supervision; they are better able to adapt to new technologies; they are likely to make fewer mistakes at work and are better team players; they are less likely to have workplace accidents; they are less likely to be absent from work, and they are likely to have better morale. Thus, it could be said that literacy prepares individuals with the ability to generate income thereby eliminating a cycle of poverty and improving the condition of living for improved health which in turn promotes development.

The consequence of the low rate of literacy on the socioeconomic development of developing countries such as sub-Saharan Africa is unimaginable. A 2015 report put the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the developing countries at a meagre 0.5 per cent. The reason adduced for such is that nations lose earnings, business productivity, wealth-creation opportunities, and high-tech skills capacity that would have yielded an increase in economic development to the lack of literacy (Lal, 2015). Meanwhile, the ability to make good investment decisions has also been tied to individuals' literacy level, which is crucial to advancing a country's economic growth agenda (Javed et.al, 2021). Moreover, human capital is the driver of GDP per capita, consequently, a population with a high literacy rate records high GDP because of the ability of the citizen to make informed financial decisions to propel the economy.

A cursory look at the economic development of various countries revealed relationships between literacy rate and socioeconomic development. For instance, Nietzel (2020) stated that the United States of America would generate an additional \$2.2 trillion which is 10% of the gross domestic product of the country in annual income if illiteracy is eradicated. This shows the significant contribution of literacy to the socioeconomic development of the country as the researcher reported further that low literacy prevents millions of Americans from fully participating in the socioeconomic activities of the nation as parents, workers, and citizens. In an attempt to reveal the impact of illiteracy on the economy, Lal (2015) stated that emerging economies, developing countries, and developed countries lose 2%, 1.2%, and 0.5% respectively of their GDP to illiteracy in way of lost earnings, lost business productivity, missed wealth creation opportunities, and inadequate high-tech skills. This could account for the researcher noting further that low literacy traps people in a cycle of poverty, limited employment or income generation opportunities, and higher chances of poor health, crime, and dependence on social welfare. In simple language, an individual could not be properly placed to contribute meaningfully to the economy of a nation without adequate literacy skills.

In the literature on the economic benefits of literacy, McCracken, and Murray (2009) while justifying the need for an increased literacy rate noted that literacy level accounts for 55% of the variance in the long-

term growth rate of GDP per capita at the national and provincial levels in Canada. This submission further gives credence to the evidence that the literacy level of a country invariably determines the rate at which the economy of the country grows. In a study on literacy and economic growth of twenty-six Asian countries, Mehmood et al (2014) investigated the relationship between, health, literacy, and economic growth. The researcher found that a high literacy rate increases demand for health services, results in healthy citizens, and translates to high productivity. The result of the highly productive citizen according to the researcher is an increase in income per capita in all the twenty-six Asian countries investigated. The study affirmed the assumption that a reading nation is a healthy nation because the level of literacy of a people would impact their reasoning and ability to make the right judgment. For instance, in Nigeria, anecdotal evidence revealed that people with low literacy have the least demand for medical health services. Even in critical conditions, they patronise traditional health providers instead of going to medical facilities to obtain treatment and care.

As reported by Javed et al. (2021), low literacy is a grave health and safety problem because people with low literacy could encounter health hazards from the inability to read, understand and interpret instructions on labels and warnings on hazardous substances. The literacy inability hinders them from making the right decisions regarding their health. McCracken and Murray (2009) rightly noted in the case of Canada that long-term economic growth is constrained by the increased rate of ill health and accidents among lower-skilled workers. This could also reflect situations among lower-skilled workers in other countries because the people in the category are often those with low literacy. Tavgiridze (2016) rightly submitted that literacy is the foundation of the development of multi-educated individuals as not many individuals could reach maximum productivity without adequate literacy. There is no gainsaying that literacy is the bedrock of economic development as its effect cuts across the health, agriculture, industry, education, and other economic sectors of every nation (Zua, 2021).

The significance of literacy to the economy of a country was further brought to bear in the submission of Boris et.al (2018). The researchers submitted that literacy is at the heart of economic policies and, therefore, a pillar of the economic system of any nation. Thus, the economy of a nation grows at the rate at which the level of its literacy grows. In a study on literacy and economic development in China, Yeon and Chu (2012) averred that the country recorded a boost in economic development when it embarked on laws, policies, and programmes that eliminated illiteracy and increased the literacy rate. China being a densely populated country was able to convert the population into an asset by increasing its literacy rate. The researchers found that an increase in the adult literacy rate resulted in an increase in per capita income and gross domestic product, establishing in clear terms that literacy rate impacts economic development.

Using the qualitative approach, Arko and Addison (2009) investigated the relationship between literacy and socioeconomic development of a group of individuals in Ghana. It was established that as the individuals' literacy level increased, there was also an increase in their socioeconomic lives. This is because, with their literacy ability, they had a better understanding to run their businesses thus recording increased returns. The increase in the individuals' literacy level also impacted their health positively through understanding that good health increases man hour which in turn results in the prosperity of their businesses. The report of a similar study carried out in India by Desai (2012) revealed that an increased literacy rate resulted in increased gross domestic product. The reason is that human capital can drive the economy towards growth because of the high level of literacy. The researcher concluded that literacy has a great impact on the economic growth of the country. Quayee (2021) calling the attention of the Sierra Leone government to the need for improved literacy among women averred that the women in the country could not contribute to economic growth due to illiteracy.

Establishing a strong correlation between literacy and economic development, Ehigiamusoe (2013) citing a previous study stated that an improved literacy level enhances the workforce in the acquisition of relevant skills and expertise needed for growth in the economic development of a country. The researcher noted that with literacy, economic growth is enhanced through higher job productivity and efficiency as the

workforce would be better equipped with the mastery of tools and techniques needed for higher job performance. However, an investigation of education and economic growth in Nigeria from 1986 to 2015 by Ademola-John (2019) revealed that despite recording a 66.9% literacy rate in the country, there was no corresponding growth in the GDP. This position is also similar to that recorded by Ehigiamuse (2013) who found that the literacy rate has a positive but insignificant contribution to the economic growth of the country. However, it was established in both studies that the little or no effect of literacy on the economic growth of Nigeria could have been borne out of brain drain, inadequate skills, and a high unemployment rate in the country.

It is noteworthy to mention that literacy should not be one-sided that is, it should not be limited to the ability to read and write because it transcends that. For literacy to impact the economic growth of a country, it should aid skill acquisition for the economic empowerment of individuals. The empowerment could be through self-employability, high productivity, or entrepreneurship. The submission in both studies also calls for concern about the quality of the literacy skills acquired by individuals in Nigeria. Meanwhile, one of the goals of the government in encouraging a high level of literacy in Nigeria is to build the human capacity needed for the attainment of economic development. However, the report of previous studies showed that the goals are still far from being achieved as literacy has not made much impact on the economy of the nation. The question would then be have the literate individuals not been able to consolidate their literacy by building on their creativity and other relevant skills?

Examining the impact of literacy on socioeconomic development from the perspective of crime rate and prison population, Van Pelt (2018) submitted that a decrease in crime and prison population rate should be taken as the positive impact of literacy on economic development. The reason is that government spending on curbing crime and reducing the prison population would be minimal. Thus, there will be more funds to run the economy for the attainment of development. Therefore, the impact of literacy is not only a direct influence but also includes indirect effects on the socioeconomic level of the citizens of the country. Bakare (2011) examined the relationship between the literacy rate and the occurrence of poverty in Nigeria using multiple regression in the analysis of the data. The researcher found that the literacy rate did not translate to a reduction in the occurrence of poverty. The implication is that the literacy rate does not impact positively the economic development of the country. The researcher however suggested that the outcome could have been influenced by the high rate of unemployment in the country.

Meanwhile, anecdotal evidence has shown that graduates turned out of University in Nigeria face challenges in adapting to evolving technologies, and techniques required for productivity in the workplace. Thus, they find it difficult to be highly productive. Since economic development is hinged on the level of productivity of the workforce, little advancement could be made where there is low productivity. Also, the per capita income is low as many of the graduates in Nigeria are underemployed or unemployed. The inadequacies of Nigerian graduates have been blamed on the underfunding of education, inadequate infrastructure, poor learning aids, dated curriculum, and a dearth of research and development. Ademola-John (2019) also noted the need for a review of education policies that will enhance in addition to literacy rate, skills acquisition, and entrepreneurship development. Irughe (2020) also suggested the encouragement of the literacy rate through free or affordable education at all levels. According to the researcher, this will ensure greater participation of all the different cadres in the GDP per capita. The suggestion was the consequence of the findings of a study by the researcher which indicated that people with a lower level of education contributed more to non-oil GDP growth while people with a higher level of education contributed more to the oil GDP growth. To encourage the continuous growth of both the oil and non-oil sectors, the research encouraged the government to pay attention to education which invariably translates to a high literacy level for all. This is important as the non-oil sector is established as the determinant of the economic diversification of Nigeria's economy, thereby preventing it from being oil-dependent.

However, Kolawole et al (2015) opined that an increased literacy rate among the lower education cadre would advance the economy of the country as those concerned would have improved productivity as they would be able to move from low-paying jobs to higher ones thereby increasing the per capita income of the country. Despite varied opinions about the impact of literacy on the socioeconomic development of a nation, it is obvious that it is impossible to shy away from the fact that the literacy rate indeed influences socioeconomic development to a great extent. According to Olojede (2013), some of the ways through which literacy rates impact socioeconomic development include the determination of jobs and salaries for individuals; increases in productivity and earnings of a population; improvement and strengthening of skills; values, communications, mobility, personal prosperity, and freedom of the people. It is noteworthy to state that literacy would make an impact when there are adequate infrastructure and facilities, appropriate learning aids, a curriculum appropriate for contemporary times, and adequate funding for education to increase the literacy rate that enhances skills acquisition.

School libraries and literacy development for socioeconomic development

Adequate infrastructure and facilities have been established as important elements in the improvement of literacy rates. It suffices to state that the school library is one of the important facilities needed for an improved literacy rate. Bakare (2011) stated that for any government to aid its sustainable economic growth and development, educational development must be a priority. Meanwhile, primary and secondary levels of education are the foundation for educational development and literacy acquisition, and in the hearts of both levels of education is the school library. A school library is a place where quality learning is enhanced through the provision of both print and digital resources aimed at enhancing reading, literacy experiences, information research, and creative and critical thinking (O'Connell, 2017). The resources in the school library help teachers to make curriculum delivery simple and easy. In addition, students are also enabled to study on their own to gain a better understanding of what they have been exposed to in the classroom.

In the process of searching for information in the school library, students' creative thinking ability could be enhanced as they are opened to a variety of information through the school library resources. The school library is a space where students are provided with information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in the increasingly information and knowledge-based present-day society. It is the space where students are equipped with lifelong learning skills and where their imagination is developed thereby enabling them to live as responsible citizens (Shashtri, 2019). The information resources provided in school libraries allow students to read widely on different topics, some of which touch on socioeconomic skills which students could leverage to develop and be actively involved in the development of the country. The school library provides an environment in which students learn to access, evaluate, and apply information using a variety of print and electronic formats aimed at helping students become effective users of information (International Federation of Libraries and Associations, 2015).

The definition by IFLA underpins the paramount role of the school library in socio-economic development. One of the purposes for which school libraries provide students with information resources as stated in the definition is for them to become effective users of information. Knowledge is said to be power, and knowledge is acquired through information. Information on financial literacy which could translate to economic development in the long run could be obtained from resources in the school library. Information on financial literacy could be more engraved in the hearts of individuals when they are exposed to it early in life through the school library. Banks (2021) highlighted some ways through which libraries contribute to economic development. According to the researcher, the library makes positive contributions to economic development by increasing the literacy rate. The researcher noted that early literacy, in particular, improves the quality of child care and academic success which empowers students to participate in the workforce at a high level in life after school.

The report of the Urban Libraries Council (2007) projected the importance of early literacy, according to the report, early investment in children's literacy is the most cost-effective strategy for long-term economic development. The reason is that early literacy creates a strong foundation for future human capital investment. Similarly, DeLong (2020) submitted that the library equips individuals with the technological skills required for the development of the workforce in contemporary times. It is no gainsaying that the workforce in the present time has to be technologically inclined to be able to contribute immensely to the growth of the economy. Libraries according to the researcher play a key role in exposing students to information, especially on digital devices through which the students who would be tomorrow's workforce could acquire the technological skills that will be needed in the future workforce. In addition, technology in libraries provides access to expensive tools, training, and skills that would not have been available to individuals.

Through technology, students acquire the requisite skills for socioeconomic development. More so, libraries are considered the gateway to knowledge because they provide the basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making, and the cultural development of individuals (Soliman and Wei, 2016). The contemporary economy requires a workforce that is highly educated and technologically skilled as the modern economy is changing from the basic manufacturing and services industry to the information and innovation industry. To prepare the workforce that is adequately able to meet the changing economy, libraries provide access to digital and print resources to build people with the knowledge and skills required (Urban Libraries Council, 2007). The library also empowers people with financial literacy abilities through access to various resources on business and financial literacy programmes that could help not only children but people who are already in business (dos Santos, 2009).

Library in general and school libraries in particular are crucial elements in the attainment of a high rate of literacy in society. The role played by libraries in the provision of facilities to enhance literacy makes it an essential element in the attainment of a developed economic status. According to the Arts Council England (2014), libraries propel socioeconomic development in different ways including serving as learning hubs where individuals are provided opportunities to try out new experiences with minimal risk; providing an environment filled with reading and ICT resources where young adults can have experiential learning through exposure to learning resources thereby reducing the personal costs of illiteracy and low educational achievement.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research approach involving the content analysis of secondary sources of information including journals, books, lecture series, proceedings of conferences, and other documentary evidence. The first part of the review examined literacy and socioeconomic development while the second part reviewed the literature on the contributions of school libraries to literacy development for socioeconomic development. Conclusion was drawn from the information extracted in the review of the literature to present recommendations on the impact of literacy on socioeconomic development and the role school library plays in literacy acquisition towards socio-economic development.

Findings

Based on the review of literature in this study, it was established that the level of literacy of a people determines the extent of their socioeconomic development as literature revealed that an increased literacy rate results in an increased gross domestic product (Quayee, 2021). Literature also showed that with literacy, the workforce is empowered with adequate skills needed to work with less supervision and high productivity (Johnston, 2004). Reviewed literature also established that literacy increases demand for health care which in turn results in healthy people who can contribute to the development of the socioeconomic of the nation (Johnston, 2004 and Mehmood, 2014). Literacy was found to have the capacity to promote human development, international businesses, and commerce (Rintaningrum, 2009). In addition, literature affirmed that literacy reduces poverty and crime but promotes democracy (Begum, 2020 & Van Pelt, 2018). Thus, as crime reduces, the government spending on crime and criminalities

would be ploughed back into the economy of the country thereby increasing its GDP. It was established that literacy serves as the gateway to the adoption of new information technology for improved productivity (Verner, (2005). The finding also indicated that a low level of literacy leads to a loss of GDP (Nietzel (2020). Findings from the reviewed literature revealed that high literacy rate is a springboard for socioeconomic development because with literacy ability comes improved health, and health indeed is wealth. It is a healthy nation that would be wealthy.

In terms of the role libraries play in literacy development, literature established that libraries provide access to resources that enhance literacy development and also provide space and information resources that enhance creative thinking in individuals. Moreover, it was found in the literature that through access to technology provided in the library, individuals are open to information on financial literacy that could help them make the right financial decisions. Also, facilities provided in libraries, were found to have the ability to equip individuals with the technological skills required for the development of the workforce which is the main driver of the economy.

Summary and conclusion

The central role of literacy in the socioeconomic development of a nation demands that more research be conducted on the concepts. There is a need to attract the attention of stakeholders in the socioeconomic sector to the important role literacy plays. A good understanding of the relationship between the two could make the government pay serious attention to increasing the literacy rate. School libraries have been found to have important and critical role in literacy development and by extension socioeconomic development of every society and nation, hence the need for government and other stakeholders in education to support the provision of adequate resources within the school libraries. Moreover, the socioeconomic development of most nations in African continents has been slowed down by the high rate of illiteracy. Therefore, the appropriate step needs to be taken to build libraries and embark on other activities and programmes capable of improving the literacy rate so that there could be a leap in the socioeconomic development of the continent.

Recommendations

It is important to note the essentiality of the school library in the development of literacy. To ensure that literacy skills and abilities are fostered in children for a productive future workforce that is economically viable, the government needs to invest heavily in school libraries as centres of information and skills acquisition. More so, economic theory suggests that human capital is an important driver of economic growth and that literacy is a key element of human capital. Thus, human capital is tightly linked with literacy because reading proficiency determines individuals' ability to learn and to adapt to changes in organizations, and in the labour market. It is therefore recommended that governments across countries should build their human capital by fostering literacy skills at all levels, especially in children. Based on the review of literature that showed the importance of literacy to socioeconomic development, it is recommended that governments pay close attention to increasing the literacy rate for improved socioeconomic development. The starting point for this increase is the establishment or refurbishment of school libraries with adequate resources to encourage literacy acquisition in pupils from an early age. Government in particular, and other stakeholders should fund school libraries to put them in positions where they would be able to assist in the promotion of literacy for the subsequent socioeconomic development of the nation. Since literacy entails a continuum of learning to help individuals develop the knowledge and potential needed to achieve their goals and become active participants in society, early development of literacy in children should be encouraged as it has been affirmed as a necessary strategy for economic development. The economic development of a nation is defined by the level of literacy of its citizens. Therefore, the government should pay attention to the provision of quality school libraries to increase the literacy rate thereby improving economic development.

References

- Ademola-John, I. C. (2019). Trends and patterns of education, poverty and economic growth in Nigeria (1986-2015). *Dutse Journal of Economics and Development Studies*, 8, 58-64. https://fud.edu.ng/journals/dujeds/2019_DEC_Vol_8/008_DUJEDS_ADEMOLA.pdf
- Arce, M. (2018). Literacy rate analysis: An international comparison. Economics Undergraduate Honors Theses Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/econuht/23>.
- Arko and Addison (2009). The impact of functional literacy on socio-economic lives of beneficiaries: a case study of the Agona District of Ghana. *Edo Journal of Counselling*, 2:2, 199-213. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejc/article/view/60860>
- Bakare, A.S. (2011). A critical appraisal of the linkage between literacy rate and the incidence of poverty in Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*. 2. 6: 450-456.
- Banks, K. (2021). The role libraries play in economic development. From: https://blog-persreader-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/blog.persreader.com/libraries-institutions/role-libraries-play-in-economic-development?hs_amp=true
- Begum, A. (2020). Role of literacy in people's lives and its importance. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 9.9: 1223-1224. DOI: 10.21275/SR20916172026.
- Boris, D. Y.G., Germain, S., Aloysius, N.M, & Edward, T.E.O. (2018). The role of literacy in the economic growth of Cameroon. *European Scientific Journal*. 14: 22, 25-53.
- Church, L. (2018). School library access as related to student reading comprehension in an Urban East Tennessee school district. *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 3479. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3479>.
- DeLong, M. N. (2020). Four ways modern libraries boost the local economy. From: <https://icma.org/blog-posts/four-ways-modern-libraries-boost-local-economy>
- Desai, V.S. (2012). Importance of literacy in India's economic growth. *International Journal of Economics and Research*, 3:2, 112-124. [https://www.ijeronline.com/documents/volumes/Vol%203%20issue%202/ijer2012030MA\(10\).pdf](https://www.ijeronline.com/documents/volumes/Vol%203%20issue%202/ijer2012030MA(10).pdf)
- Ehigiamusoe, U.K. (2013). Education, economic growth & poverty rate in Nigeria: Any nexus? *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4:12, 544-553. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302909369_Education_Economic_Growth_Poverty_Rate_in_Nigeria_Any_Nexus/link/57f72bef08ae91deaa5ed9b2/download
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2015). IFLA school library guideline, 2nd Revised Edition. <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/school-libraries-resource-centers/publications/ifla-school-library-guidelines.pdf>
- Irughe, R.I., Eregha, P.B., & Edafe, J. (2020). Education and economic growth: empirical evidence from Nigeria. *African Economic Research Consortium, Research Paper 407*. Nairobi, African Economic Research Consortium. from <https://aercafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Research-Paper-407.pdf>
- Javed, M., Abbas, Q., and Hussain, S. (2021). Low literacy rate at primary level: identification of causes and impacts. *Pakistan Social Science Review*, 5: 492-506.
- Johnston, Grant. (2004). Adult literacy and economic growth. *New Zealand Treasury Working Paper, No. 04/24*, New Zealand Government, The Treasury, Wellington
- Julien, H. (2016). Beyond the hyperbole: Information literacy reconsidered. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 10:2, 124-131.
- Kolawole, B.O., Omobitan, O.A., & Yaqub, J.O. (2015). Poverty, inequality and rising growth in Nigeria: Further empirical evidence. *International Journal of Economics and Finance*. 7:2, 51-62. <https://ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijef/article/view/44637>.
- Khumalo, Z. (2019). Read, write, develop: The social and economic impact of literacy in South Africa. *MSC Dissertation, University of Cape Town*, viii + 56 pg. https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/32354/thesis_com_2020_khumalo%20ziyanda.pdf?sequence=1

- Lal, B. S. (2015). The economic and social cost of illiteracy: An overview. *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*. 1:5, 663-670.
http://ijariie.com/AdminUploadPdf/The_Economic_and_Social_Cost_of_Illiteracy__An_Overview_ijariie1493.pdf.
- Litwiński, M. (2017). The evolution of idea of socio-economic development. *Ekonomia I Prawo. Economics and Law*, 16:4, 449-458.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322815766_The_evolution_of_idea_of_socio-economic_development
- McCracken, M., and Murray, T.S. (2009). The economic benefits of literacy: evidence and implications for public policy.
<http://www.dataangelca.net/docs/EconomicBenefitsofLiteracy2010.pdf>.
- Mehmood, B., Raza, S.H., and Mureed, S. (2014). Health expenditure, literacy and economic growth: PMG evidence from Asian Countries. *Euro-Asian Journal of Economics and Finance*. 2:4, 408-417. <http://www.absronline.org/journals>
- Montoya, S. (2018). *Defining literacy*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
- Naik, M.M. & Padmini, 2014. Importance of Information Literacy. *International Journal of Digital Library Services*, 4(3), 92-100.
<http://www.ijodls.in/uploads/3/6/0/3/3603729/9434.pdf>
- Nietzel, M.T. (2020). Illiteracy among U.S. adults could be costing the economy \$2.2 trillion a year. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnietzel/2020/09/09/low-literacy-levels-among-us-adults-could-be-costing-the-economy-22-trillion-a-year/?sh=6bb12f8f4c90>
- O’Connell, J. (2017). *School Libraries*. *Global Library and Information Science*.
DOI:10.1515/9783110413120-016
- Olojede, A.A., Adekunle, A.A, & Samuel, E.A. (2013). Analysis of rural literacy as a panacea for socioeconomic development of Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. 5:9, 381-390.
https://academicjournals.org/article/article1382352012_OLOJEDE.pdf
- Quayee, A. (2021). Women socioeconomic status: the repercussion of illiteracy, case study: Charlotte, Sierra Leone. *Young African Leaders Journal of Development*, 3, Article 28.
<https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/yajod/vol3/iss1/28>
- Rintaningrum, R. (2009). Literacy: Its importance and changes in the concept and definition. *TEFLON Journal*, 20:1.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47523879_Literacy_Its_Importance_and_Changes_in_the_Concept_and_Definition.
- Rublev, G., Bogdanova, L., Kurbatova, S., Krasnousov, S., and Kolmakov, V. (2021). Socio-economic model of sustainable development. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202124410053>
- Shastri, N.A (2019). Standards for school library in 21st century: in the context of Indian school education. *International Journal of Research in all Subjects in Multi Languages*, 7:1, 29-32.
https://www.raijmr.com/ijrsm/ wpcontent/uploads/2019/10/IJRSML_2019_vol07_issu e_1_Eng_08.pdf
- Soliman, S. and Wei, P. (2016). The impacts of economic development on public libraries: a study case of Bibliotheca Alexandrina Library. *Modern Economy*, 7, 619-632.
doi:10.4236/me.2016.75068.
- Tavdgiridze, L. (2016). Literacy competence formation of the modern school. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 7: 26, 107-110. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1115864.pdf>.
- Todd, R.J. (2012). *School libraries and the development of intellectual agency: Evidence from New Jersey*. American Association of School Librarians.
<http://www.ala.org/aasl/slr/volume15/todd>.
- Urban Libraries Council (2007). *Making Cities Stronger: Public library contributions to local economic development*. The Urban Institute. <https://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/report-manjarraz-et-al.pdf>

- Van Pelt J. (2018). What is the connection between literacy and economic development? Words Alive. <https://www.wordsalive.org/blog/2018/2/22/what-is-the-connection-between-literacy-and-economic-development>
- Vener, D. (2005). What factor influence world literacy: Is Africa different? *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 3496.
- Wilson, R. T. (2016). Literacy and its significance in modern life. *Colleagues*, 13(1), 9-16. <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/colleagues/vol13/iss1/5>
- World Literacy Foundation (2018). The economic & social cost of illiteracy. *A white paper by the World Literacy Foundation presented at the 2018 World Literacy Summit* held at Oxford, United Kingdom from 25-27 March, 2018.
- Yeon, E.K., and Chu, K. (2012). Literacy, education and economic development in contemporary China. *China-Asian Perspective Forum*. 2:1&2, 11-83. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2207559
- Zua, B. (2021). Literacy, Gateway to a world of exploits. *International Journal of Education & literacy Studies*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.9n.1p.96>