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Leveraging Adult Education as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic Change in Rural Tanzanian Communities: A Case Study of Mbarali District

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Abstract

For decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of adult education in transforming the socioeconomic development of rural communities. This paper examines the potential of adult education as a catalyst for socioeconomic change in rural Tanzanian communities in Mbarali District. The study employed a qualitative design, specifically a case study approach. It comprised fifteen participants, namely adult learners and adult learner facilitators. The study participants included the adult learners' facilitators and adult learners. Data were collected through focus group discussions and interviews. The results highlight the significance of adult learning programmes in the socioeconomic development of rural communities. These include: poverty reduction through literacy and basic education, agricultural education and sustainable development, vocational training and skills development, entrepreneurship and business skills. Moreover, the study revealed about empowering women and enhancing gender

equality, and lastly fostering community development and civic participation. Therefore, this study recommends that collaborative efforts between the government and education stakeholders take collective measures to support adult learning centres for better socioeconomic transformation.

Keywords: *Adult education, catalyst, socio-economic change, rural communities, Tanzania*

Introduction

Globally, adult education is a powerful tool for fostering socio-economic change, particularly in rural communities where access to formal education and economic opportunities is often limited (Rahman, 2017). It equips individuals with practical skills and knowledge that improve their livelihood and contribute to community development. By focusing on areas such as agriculture, entrepreneurship, health, and literacy, adult education enables rural populations to address local challenges and improve productivity (Mwang'onda, Swai & Charles, 2020). Moreover, it promotes social inclusion and empowers individuals to participate in decision-making processes, leading to more resilient and sustainable communities. When effectively implemented, adult education catalyses economic growth, poverty reduction, and overall well-being in rural areas, paving the way for broader societal transformation (Komba & Mbele, 2017).

The concept of adult education encompasses a broad range of learning opportunities designed to meet the educational needs of adults who may have missed out on formal schooling or those who seek to enhance their skills later in life. These programmes typically focus on areas such as literacy, numeracy, vocational skills, health education, and entrepreneurship, enabling rural residents to become self-reliant and improve their socio-economic conditions. According to Jarvis (2020), adult education is not only a means of acquiring skills but also a platform for personal growth, social inclusion, and community empowerment. In

rural settings, where formal education is inaccessible due to geographical, economic, or cultural barriers, adult education serves as a lifeline for individuals seeking to break the cycle of poverty (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014).

In rural areas, adult education is seen as a catalyst for socio-economic change due to its ability to address local challenges and empower individuals to engage with the economy (Mbunda, 2015). Many rural communities rely heavily on agriculture as their primary source of income. However, without adequate education and skills, farmers and rural workers often struggle to maximize their productivity and income potential (Mbunda, 2015). Adult education programmes that focus on agricultural techniques, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy provide rural populations with the skills to improve crop yields, manage finances, and explore new business opportunities. A study by UNESCO (2015) highlights that adult education in rural areas contributes to increased productivity, higher income levels, and better living conditions, all of which are essential components of sustainable development.

One of the key ways adult education drives socio-economic change is through its focus on vocational training and skill development. Vocational programmes designed for rural populations often include training in areas such as agriculture, small-scale industry, handicrafts, and service-related jobs. These programmes equip adults with marketable skills that enable them to create new income streams, reduce dependency on subsistence farming, and foster local economic growth (Rahman, 2017). Moreover, adult education programmes promote social inclusion and gender equality, particularly in rural settings where traditional gender roles limit women's access to education and economic opportunities. Adult education initiatives that target women provide them with literacy, health education, and entrepreneurial skills, enabling them to participate more fully in community life and contribute to their families' economic well-being. According to Stromquist (2014), empowering communities through adult

education leads to improved health outcomes, higher levels of civic participation, and greater financial independence, all of which are essential for the socio-economic development of rural communities.

Adult education has long been recognised as a potential tool for empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve livelihoods and contribute meaningfully to their communities. While adult education programmes exist in many parts of the country in Tanzania, there is limited empirical evidence on how effectively they address the specific needs of rural populations, particularly in Mbarali District. Many programmes focus on literacy and numeracy but may not sufficiently integrate practical vocational skills, entrepreneurship training, and community development knowledge that could drive tangible economic improvement (Mbunda, 2015). Furthermore, challenges such as inadequate funding, poorly trained facilitators, and low community awareness often undermine the potential impact of adult education initiatives, leaving a gap between policy intentions and actual outcomes on the ground (Mwang'onda, Swai & Charles, 2020).

This situation raises critical questions about how adult education can be strategically leveraged as a catalyst for socioeconomic change in rural Tanzania. Without a clear understanding of its current contributions and limitations, stakeholders risk overlooking a powerful means of promoting rural transformation. Investigating the case of Mbarali District offers an opportunity to assess how adult education can be aligned with local development priorities, address pressing community needs, and ultimately serve as a driver of poverty reduction, skills development, and sustainable rural livelihoods.

Literature Review

In various contexts, numerous researchers agree that adult education serves as a vital instrument for driving socioeconomic transformation, especially in rural areas where access to formal schooling and economic

opportunities is frequently restricted (Mwangi & Nyangena, 2021; Stromquist, 2014).

The Influence of Adult Education Programmes on Income-Generating Activities among Rural Communities

Rural communities, characterised by high poverty levels, inadequate infrastructure, and limited educational resources, face significant barriers to development (Mwangi & Nyangena, 2021). Adult education bridges this gap and drives sustainable change by providing skills, knowledge, and empowerment to individuals. Through literacy programmes, vocational training, agricultural education, and entrepreneurial initiatives, adult education equips rural populations to overcome challenges and improve their economic well-being (Masabo & Mtahabwa, 2019).

The study in Brazil by Araujo (2020) reveals that the Programa Nacional de Educação na Reforma Agrária (PRONERA) focuses on providing education to rural workers and land reform settlers, with an emphasis on literacy and vocational training. PRONERA aims to improve the livelihoods of rural populations by teaching them skills related to sustainable agriculture and community development. Through this programme, rural workers gain the knowledge needed to increase agricultural productivity and contribute to the development of their communities. In Ethiopia, the government's Integrated Functional Adult Education (IFAE) programme combines literacy training with vocational and life skills education. The programme focuses on improving agricultural productivity, health awareness, and financial literacy among rural populations, contributing to poverty reduction and community development (Habtamu, 2021).

South Africa's Kha Ri Gude campaign has provided literacy and numeracy training to millions of rural adults, helping them improve their livelihoods and participate more actively in the economy (Olojede, 2022). In Tanzania, Mwaikokesya and Ndunguru (2016) found that adult literacy programmes

significantly improved participants' ability to manage small businesses, engage in agricultural production, and access financial services.

Adult Education Initiatives Enhance Skills and Knowledge Relevant to Improving Rural Livelihoods

The study by Yadav (2018) in India reveals that the National Literacy Mission (NLM) offers programmes focusing on literacy, numeracy, and vocational training, enabling rural adults to improve their employability and economic standing. In Sweden, Larsson (2019) notes that adult education, through Folk High Schools, provides lifelong learning opportunities to rural residents. These schools offer flexible learning paths that allow rural adults to acquire new skills, improve their education levels, and engage in community development initiatives. In Ethiopia, the IFAE programme integrates vocational and life skills training, improving agricultural productivity, health awareness, and financial literacy (Habtamu, 2021).

The Effects of Participation in Adult Education Programmes on the Social Empowerment and Community Participation of Rural Residents

Yadav (2018) found that the NLM in India, by targeting women, significantly impacted gender equality, empowering women to take on leadership roles in their communities and contribute to household income. In Sweden, adult education not only enhances individual capacity but also strengthens social cohesion in rural communities by promoting democratic values and civic participation (Larsson, 2019). South Africa's Kha Ri Gude campaign has helped rural adults participate more actively in the economy and community life (Olojede, 2022).

In general, from the literature, it has been shown that adult education is widely recognised as a vital instrument for driving socioeconomic transformation in rural areas, where access to formal education and

economic opportunities is often limited. Also, the literature pinpointed that many countries globally have established various adult education programmes to transform adult learners into socioeconomic development. Moreover, it has been shown that the socioeconomic transformation of adult learners varies significantly from one country to another. Some countries have made more progress in promoting socioeconomic transformation through adult education programmes, while others continue to face challenges. In Tanzania, little is known about how adult education is a catalyst for socioeconomic change in rural Tanzanian communities.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative case study design to explore how adult education can act as a catalyst for socioeconomic transformation in rural Tanzanian communities. The design was chosen because it allows a deep understanding of people's real-life experiences, attitudes, and behaviours (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Alase, 2017). Fifteen people took part in the study: five adult education facilitators and ten adult learners, all purposely selected because of their direct involvement in adult education. Data were collected in Mbarali District, Mbeya region, using focus group discussions with learners and semi-structured interviews with facilitators. The focus groups created space for learners to share and reflect on their experiences together, while the interviews gave facilitators an opportunity to describe their work and the impact of adult education in detail (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Leavy, 2014; Omari, 2011). The information gathered was analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2021) framework, which helped identify key patterns and themes in the stories participants shared. To make the findings authentic and grounded, the study used participants' own words to highlight their voices and show how adult education is shaping change in rural communities.

Results

This study investigated leveraging adult education as a catalyst for socioeconomic change in rural Tanzanian communities with a focus on Mbarali District. This study was guided by three objectives namely to investigate the influence of adult education programmes on income-generating activities among rural communities in Mbarali District, to examine how adult education initiatives enhance skills and knowledge relevant to improving rural livelihoods in Mbarali District, and to determine the effects of participation in adult education programmes on the social empowerment and community participation of rural residents in Mbarali District.

Six themes emerged from the focus group discussions and interviews regarding leveraging adult education as a catalyst for socioeconomic change in rural Tanzanian communities. These are discussed below as per the research objectives.

Influence of Adult Education on Income-Generating Activities in Mbarali District

The first objective investigated the influence of adult education programmes on income-generating activities among rural communities in Mbarali District. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions from adult learners and facilitators of adult learning programmes. The study revealed that adult education programmes in the study area were tailored to ensure that communities who attended benefited in various aspects. The notable benefits are presented in the following sections.

Poverty reduction through literacy and basic education

The study revealed that one of the primary roles of adult education in Tanzania was poverty alleviation through literacy and basic education. In many rural areas, illiteracy remained a significant barrier to economic

development, limiting individuals' ability to access information, understand market trends, and participate in income-generating activities. During the focus group discussions and interviews, it was reported that adult education programmes, such as literacy campaigns, were designed to equip adults with the reading, writing, and numeracy skills necessary to improve their economic prospects and contribute to community development. One of the participants was quoted as:

Adult literacy programmes in rural Tanzania have played a crucial role in empowering participants by significantly improving their ability to manage small businesses, engage in agricultural production, and access financial services. These programmes provide individuals with essential knowledge and practical skills, enabling them to make informed decisions, better organise their business activities, and improve productivity in agriculture. Furthermore, increased literacy enhances their ability to navigate financial systems, such as applying for loans or managing savings, which in turn strengthens their economic resilience. By equipping rural communities with these tools, adult education actively contributes to poverty reduction, improved livelihoods, and sustainable development in these regions (Interview with Adult Learners Facilitator, Centre).

On a similar note, another participant was quoted as saying:

Through our adult education programmes, we have witnessed a remarkable transformation among participants. Many have gained critical skills not only to run their small businesses more efficiently but also to adopt better farming techniques that increase their yields. Additionally, these programmes help learners understand and access financial services like microloans and savings groups, which were previously out of reach for many. By building these capabilities, adult education empowers individuals to become more self-reliant and contributes significantly to improving their families' economic conditions and the overall well-being of the community (Interview with Adult Education Facilitator, Centre).

The quotations emphasise the transformative impact of adult literacy programmes on rural communities in Tanzania. It highlighted how these programmes empowered individuals by providing them with the

knowledge and skills necessary to effectively manage small businesses, engage more productively in agriculture, and access financial services such as loans and savings accounts. As a result, participants could make informed decisions, increase their economic productivity, and improve their financial stability. The overall message was that adult education served as a vital tool for enhancing livelihoods, reducing poverty, and fostering sustainable development in rural areas by addressing key economic challenges and building resilience.

Agricultural education and sustainable development

The study revealed that adult education in agriculture remained the backbone of Tanzania's rural economy, and adult education played a critical role in enhancing agricultural productivity and promoting sustainable development. Adult education programmes that focused on agricultural techniques, sustainable farming practices, and environmental conservation equipped rural farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to improve crop yields, manage natural resources, and adapt to climate change. One of the participants was quoted as:

We provide adult farmers with practical, hands-on training in modern farming techniques. As a result, community members have increased agricultural productivity, improved food security, and higher household incomes. Moreover, adult education promotes sustainable agricultural practices, such as soil conservation and water management, which are essential for long-term rural development. By enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability, adult education contributes to the overall economic well-being of rural communities (Interview with Adult Learners Facilitator, Centre).

Another quotation was provided by a female adult learner who explained the following:

Our training sessions focus on equipping adult farmers with the skills needed to adopt improved agricultural methods. Many participants have reported better crop yields and more reliable harvests, which have strengthened food availability and increased their family incomes.

Additionally, the education we provide emphasises environmentally friendly practices like crop rotation and efficient water use, helping to preserve the land for future generations. These efforts have made a meaningful impact on both the livelihoods of individuals and the sustainability of the wider community (Focus Group Discussion with Adult Learners, Centre).

The quotations underscore the significance of providing adult farmers with practical training in modern farming techniques. This hands-on approach led to tangible benefits, such as increased agricultural productivity, improved food security, and higher household incomes for community members. It highlighted that adult education not only addressed immediate economic needs but also fostered sustainable agricultural practices, like soil conservation and water management, which were vital for the long-term health of rural environments. By enhancing both productivity and sustainability, adult education played a crucial role in boosting the overall economic well-being of rural communities, demonstrating its transformative power in creating resilient and prosperous agricultural systems.

Enhancing Skills and Knowledge Through Adult Education for Rural Livelihoods in Mbarali District

The second objective examined how adult education initiatives enhance skills and knowledge relevant to improving rural livelihoods in Mbarali District. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions from adult learners and facilitators of adult learning programmes. The study revealed that adult education programmes in the study area were tailored to ensure that communities who attended acquired skills which helped them in socioeconomic transformation, as presented in the following sections.

Vocational training and skills development

The study revealed that adult education played a crucial role in vocational training and skills development. Many Tanzanians, particularly those in

rural areas, relied on agriculture and small-scale enterprises for their livelihoods. However, without proper training and skills, these individuals often struggled to increase their productivity and improve their incomes. Adult education programmes that provided vocational training in areas such as agriculture, carpentry, tailoring, and mechanics helped individuals acquire the technical skills needed to succeed in their respective fields. During the focus group discussion, one participant was quoted as saying:

Vocational training programmes, such as those offered at the centre, have been instrumental in promoting socio-economic development. This centre offers practical, skills-based training in various trades, enabling us to improve our self-employment and income-generating capacity. Upon our graduation from these programmes, we found higher levels of employment and income, with many establishing small businesses or improving our agricultural productivity. This demonstrates the transformative potential of vocational adult education in driving economic development (Focus Group Discussion with Adult Learners, Centre).

Similarly, another participant noted:

Vocational training programmes provided at the centre have played a vital role in equipping learners with hands-on skills that directly enhance their ability to generate income and sustain livelihoods. Many participants have successfully started small businesses or applied new techniques in agriculture, leading to noticeable improvements in their household incomes. These programmes not only improve technical abilities but also boost learners' confidence and motivation to pursue economic opportunities, making a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of our rural communities (Interview with Adult Education Facilitator, Centre).

The excerpts highlight the significant impact of vocational training programmes on socio-economic development. It pointed out that the centre provided practical, skills-based education in various trades, which enhanced participants' employability and capacity to generate income. After completing these programmes, many participants experienced improved job prospects and higher earnings, with some starting small

businesses or enhancing their agricultural output. This emphasised the transformative role of vocational adult education in boosting economic growth, self-employment, and overall livelihood improvement. It showcased how equipping individuals with practical skills led to tangible economic benefits for both individuals and communities.

Entrepreneurship and business skills

The study revealed that through adult learning programmes, learners were able to learn about how to establish and run small business management, and financial literacy (budgeting, saving, accessing microcredit). All these skills were reported to help adult learners to better manage their finances, increase their income, and create sustainable livelihoods. The knowledge gained empowered them to make informed decisions, plan for the future, and access financial services that were previously unavailable or difficult to obtain. As one participant was quoted as saying:

We have seen many adult learners transform their lives after acquiring basic business management and financial skills. They are now able to run their small enterprises more efficiently, keep track of their expenses, and even apply for loans to expand their businesses. This empowerment is crucial for improving their economic independence and resilience (Interview with Adult Education Facilitator, Centre).

Contributing to the same concept, one of the male adult learners added:

Before joining the programme, I didn't understand how to save money or plan for my small shop. Now, I can budget my income, save a little each month, and I even accessed a microloan to buy more stock. This has helped me increase my earnings and support my family better (Focus Group Discussion with Adult Learner).

The excerpts collectively emphasise the transformative impact of adult education programmes on learners' economic capabilities and livelihoods. The adult education facilitator's statement underscores the acquisition of fundamental business management and financial literacy skills as pivotal in enabling learners to operate their small enterprises more effectively.

This includes practical competencies such as expense tracking and accessing financial resources like loans. The facilitator frames these skills as forms of empowerment that enhance economic independence and build resilience, suggesting that learners gain greater control over their financial futures and can better withstand economic challenges.

Effects of Adult Education on Social Empowerment and Community Participation in Rural Areas

The third objective determined the effects of adult education on social empowerment and community participation in rural areas in Mbarali District. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions with adult learners and adult learner facilitators. The study revealed that adult education programmes in the study area were tailored to ensure that communities who attended acquired were empowered to the level of socioeconomic transformation, as presented in the following sections.

Empowering women and enhancing gender equality

The study revealed that adult education was also a powerful tool for empowering women and promoting gender equality in rural areas. It was reported that in many rural communities, women faced significant socio-cultural barriers to education and economic participation. Adult education programmes that targeted women not only improved their literacy and vocational skills but also provided them with the knowledge and confidence to participate in community decision-making processes and improve their economic standing. During the focus group discussions, one participant was quoted as saying:

Adult learning programmes at this centre have contributed to increased literacy rates among women and have empowered us to engage in income-generating activities, such as small-scale farming and entrepreneurship. This empowerment has had a ripple effect on household income and community development, as educated women,

we are more likely to invest in our children's education and contribute to local economies (Focus Group Discussion with Adult Learners, Centre).

Similarly, another participant noted:

Adult education programmes at our centre have empowered many rural residents by improving their literacy and practical skills, which have enabled them to participate more fully in economic and social activities. We have seen learners gain confidence to engage in community decision-making and start various income-generating ventures. This empowerment strengthens not only individual livelihoods but also promotes collective progress, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community (Interview with Adult Education Facilitator, Centre).

The quotations highlight the positive impact of adult learning programmes on women, particularly in improving literacy rates and empowering them to participate in income-generating activities like small-scale farming and entrepreneurship. This empowerment not only boosted household income but also drove broader community development. Educated women were more likely to invest in their children's education, fostering the next generation's growth, and contributing to local economic activities. The quote emphasised how adult education had a multiplier effect, benefiting both individual families and the wider community, reinforcing the crucial role of women in socioeconomic progress.

Fostering community development and civic participation

The study revealed that, beyond economic benefits, adult education in Tanzania played a significant role in fostering community development and civic participation. It was reported that many adult education programmes included components of civic education, leadership training, and community development, encouraging individuals to take active roles in local governance and decision-making processes. This promoted social cohesion, democratic participation, and the development of community-

driven solutions to local challenges. The following quotes were provided by the participants:

We are ensuring that our centre is keen to foster community development and civic participation. For example, we use the Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE) programme to combine literacy training with community development initiatives, empowering adults to participate in village meetings, form savings groups, and engage in collective action for community improvement (Interview with Adult Learners Facilitator, Centre).

Similarly, other participants added that:

Through the ICBAE programme, we are more likely to participate in local governance and take on leadership roles in community organisations, contributing to stronger and more resilient rural communities. Adult education, therefore, not only improves our livelihoods but also strengthens the social and political fabric of our rural communities (FGD with Adult Learners, Centre).

The quotations highlight the dual impact of the Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE) programme on both individual empowerment and community development. The first quote emphasised that the programme fostered civic participation by combining literacy training with community initiatives, enabling adults to engage in local governance, form savings groups, and take collective action for improvement. The second quote reinforced this idea, illustrating how participation in the ICBAE programme enhanced individuals' involvement in local governance and leadership roles, which contributed to building stronger, more resilient rural communities. Together, these quotes suggested that adult education was a catalyst not only for improving livelihoods but also for enhancing the social and political dynamics within rural communities, leading to overall community empowerment and resilience.

Discussion

This study found that adult education served as a vital instrument for socio-economic development in Tanzania, particularly in rural areas where access to formal education and economic opportunities was limited. One of the important roles of adult education as a catalyst for socioeconomic change in rural Tanzanian communities was poverty reduction through literacy and basic education. Peters and Sutherland (2020) found that adult education significantly enhances economic opportunities and encourages self-sufficiency among participants, directly contributing to poverty reduction. Additionally, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2016) reported that improving literacy skills among adults leads to increased employment opportunities, higher incomes, and more effective participation in local economies, ultimately contributing to reduced poverty levels. Meyer and Chisanga (2018) concluded that adult literacy not only helps individuals secure better-paying jobs but also promotes community engagement and empowerment, which are crucial for sustainable poverty reduction.

The study also revealed that adult education played a crucial role in vocational training and skills development. The findings resonate with Kamp (2019), who found that vocational training through adult education significantly improved participants' job prospects and income levels, demonstrating the effectiveness of skill development programmes in fostering economic growth. Additionally, Mohammed and Mathews (2020) found that effective vocational training enhances individuals' employability, thereby reducing unemployment rates and promoting economic stability in communities. Schultz (2018) found that adult education significantly contributes to labour market readiness by providing practical skills training, which is essential for increasing productivity and fostering economic development.

The study revealed that adult education was also a powerful tool for empowering women and promoting gender equality in rural areas. The findings are in tandem with Maqbool and Alavi (2020), who found that women who participated in adult education programmes reported improved self-esteem, increased income, and greater involvement in community decision-making processes, thereby contributing to gender equality. Khan (2018) found that adult education significantly enhances women's abilities to engage in income-generating activities, ultimately leading to improved household decision-making power and increased gender equity in rural settings. Fisher and Ritchie (2019) found that participation in adult education programmes significantly improved women's literacy levels, self-advocacy skills, and access to economic resources, contributing to greater gender equality and community development.

The study revealed that adult education programmes that focused on agricultural techniques, sustainable farming practices, and environmental conservation equipped rural farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to improve crop yields, manage natural resources, and adapt to climate change. The findings can be extrapolated from Kassam and Yamada (2019), who found that farmers who participated in adult programmes reported increased crop yields and improved resource management skills, enabling them to adapt better to climate variations and environmental challenges. Ogunniyi and Kola (2020) found that adult education significantly improved farmers' knowledge of sustainable practices, which led to better management of natural resources, increased crop productivity, and more resilience to climate change impacts. Maitra and Narayan (2021) found that educational interventions equipped farmers with practical skills in modern agricultural techniques and sustainable practices, which led to improved food security and environmental sustainability.

The study revealed that through adult learning programmes, learners were able to learn about how to establish and run small business management, and financial literacy (budgeting, saving, accessing microcredit). The findings are in line with Mwaikokesya and Ndunguru (2016), who found that adult literacy programmes in rural Tanzania significantly improved participants' ability to manage small businesses, engage in agricultural production, and access financial services, thereby enhancing their income-generating capacity and overall livelihoods.

Lastly, the findings revealed that adult education played a significant role in fostering community development and civic participation. The findings resonate with Huisman and van der Wende (2018), who found that adult education programmes significantly enhance civic participation by providing individuals with the competencies to engage in community activities and local governance. Participants reported greater social cohesion and involvement in community projects as a result of their educational experiences. Zhang and Huang (2020) found that adult education programmes have been crucial in mobilising community members for collective action, enhancing their understanding of civic rights and responsibilities, and fostering a culture of participation. Participants indicated that these programmes led to improved community initiatives and increased local governance engagement.

Conclusion

Generally, adult education is widely recognised as a vital instrument for driving socioeconomic transformation in rural areas, where access to formal education and economic opportunities is often limited. By addressing literacy gaps, providing vocational training, empowering women, enhancing agricultural productivity, and promoting civic participation, adult education equips rural populations with the skills and knowledge needed to improve their livelihoods and contribute to community development.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made to stakeholders; -

- i) Adult education should not be treated as a side programme but woven into the country's main development plans on rural growth, poverty reduction, and empowerment. By doing this, governments can ensure steady funding, stronger coordination, and recognition that adult education is not just about learning, but about changing lives and communities.
- ii) Adult education works best when people can immediately apply what they learn. This means linking programmes with practical skills like modern farming, small business management, or digital skills, and pairing them with access to markets, cooperatives, and microfinance. When education is tied to real opportunities, learners can see clear benefits in their incomes and daily lives, which makes both individuals and communities stronger.

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