

## Impact of Adult Literacy Centers on Women Social Lives in District Malakand Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: A Case Study of NCHD Adult Literacy Program

Itbar Khan\* Zafar Iqbal Choudhry† Asghar Ali‡



**Abstract** *This study explores the impacts of adult literacy centers for woman in District Malakand. The students of adult literacy centers of District Malakand constitute the population of the study. There are 6 centers, three each for males and females. A group of 10 women in each female center was selected for focus group discussion. A sample of 30 individuals was taken with the help of Judgmental sampling. The primary data were collected with the help of a focus group discussion. Questions were asked from the participants keeping in view the objectives and relevant literature. The participants were inquired what they gained from the adult literacy program. During the group discussion Field notes were taken and the discussion was also recorded. After each group discussion the recorded data was transcribed verbatim. Data were verified by comparing the field notes and video. All transcriptions and field notes were thoroughly read by the researchers. Three stage approaches were adopted for data reduction. The narrative of the participants was changed into a simple description. Description was categorized under one theme. Representative quotations were also added to various response categories, themes and patterns emerging from the data. The participants showed positive response. They learnt basic reading, and writing, they could check the homework of their children, literacy brought awareness in their lives and this literacy program enabled them to start small business. Moreover, the centers provided an opportunity for socialization.*

### Key Words:

Adult Literacy,  
Female  
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### Introduction

Pakistan has stressed the importance of education in the very first education conference in 1947. It says that the success of Pakistan hinges on the type of

\* Lecturer, Department of Education, University of Malakand, Chakdara, KP, Pakistan.

Email: [educationmkd@gmail.com](mailto:educationmkd@gmail.com)

† Assistant Professor, Department of Education, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Malakand, Chakdara, KP, Pakistan.

education which we provide to our nation. In this educational conference various committees were formed and one of them was for adult education. Rate of illiteracy was as high as 85% (National Education Conference, 1947). Adult literacy rates of Pakistan are amongst the lowest in the world. There are a total of 53,483,715 adults aged 15 years and older who do not have literacy skills or have only low levels, out of which 64.3% are women. Adults with low or no literacy skills represent 28.9% of the country's total population. Young people aged 15 to 24 years, nearly 10 million have low or no literacy skills, out of which 6 million are young women (UIS, 2015). Pakistan was graded 106th out of 113 nations in the Education for All Development Index (UNESCO, 2012) and 147th out of 188 in the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2015).

The literacy ratio in Pakistan is not satisfactory and it is lowest in the region which has negative impacts on the economy of the country. Pakistan needs to take proper measures for improving literacy rate (Rehman, Jingdong & Hussain (2015). There are many reasons of illiteracy, one of such reasons is poverty. According to World Bank, 2016b report the number of people who are susceptible to poverty is high in Pakistan. And 45% of population in Pakistan lives on less than US\$2 per day (UIS, 2014). Another is the conflict in many parts of Pakistan, especially in KP and FATA. Many schools were demolished and millions of people were displaced ((World Bank, 2016a).

### **Adult Literacy and Types of Literacies**

Adult literacy refers to public education program for all adults and to make them aware of how to read, write and spend a peaceful life like others. Adult literacy is an effective tool to minimize the gap between literates and illiterates (Bedder, 1991).

There are various types of literacies, for example, cultural Literacy which makes an individual to understand about the resemblance and dissimilarities in the norms, traditions and beliefs of own culture and others too; multicultural literacy provides knowledge about languages, perceptions, culture, multi-sensory data like graphics, sounds and the prejudice of language and content. Media literacy deals with the decisive information about mass media. Bi-literacy makes an individual aware of how to read in two or more than two languages. Visual Literacy is that type of literacy which deals with the understanding and creation of visual communication. Computer literacy means literacy which deals with the knowledge of how to use a computer. Mathematical Literacy/numeracy gives knowledge about symbols and arithmetic. Global literacy enables individuals belong to different nations, cultural and caste, how to interact successfully with each other. Information Literacy is that type of literacy which deals that how to use and communicate information and pass such information from one person to another by vocal means or written work Adult Literacy Adult literacy refers to public

education program for all adults and just to make them aware of how to read, write and spend a peaceful life like others (Rose, 2009).

### **Benefits of Literacy**

Literacy plays a vital role in ameliorating the lives of people by bringing economic security and good health. It builds human resources; brings cultural identity, promotes tolerance and pushes participation of people in civic activities (NCHD, 2013). Literacy ensures personal, social, economic and technological development. Literacy is a key of transforming lives and provides educational opportunities. "Literacy is essential for basic education and it is a first step for removing poverty, minimizing child mortality, controlling population growth, realizing gender equality and warranting sustainable development, peace and democracy (UNESCO, 2010). Chadha and Wadhwa (2018) in their study of the impact of adult literacy found that the impact of literacy has far-reaching effects; it touches personal and public lives by improving self-image, increased movement, and changing attitudes to social problems. Moreover, literacy helps in more political and civic engagement.

Literacy brings changes in the lives of people and societies. For instance, functional adult literacy programs has noted a success story in Liberia. The participants in the program were noted that they became more involved in social life; worked for peace; used financial scheme for benefits, and improved their management of the income generating activities (Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation Report, 2013).

Adult literacy increases chances for employment. Beder (1999) found that the participants in adult literacy education got more chances of employment and it made them lifelong learners. Moreover, it improved their self-image and enhanced their basic literacy skills. Furthermore, literacy programs promote the participation of parents in their children's schooling. The adult learners feel that they are able to achieve their mission in life. In modern world, there is more use of technology, more life expectancy, global movements and these demand more emphasis on adult literacy. All people accept the power of adult literacy for bringing social cohesion, civic education, health and economic growth. According to Batool and Batool (2018) Education is the first step for empowering women which leads to increase in income and self-esteem.

It is noteworthy that approximately 758 million adults (114 million young people aged between 15 and 24) still cannot read or write a simple sentence and two out of three are women in these illiterate persons (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). These figures reveal that too many persons will be unable to make progress and above all gender equality becomes a far cry. The world is changing now people need to ensure full participation for the solution of problems. World leaders know the importance and that is why education is an important element of

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which governments approved at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 (UNESCO,2016).

Adult Literacy is a tool for improving standard of life and condition of human resources. Pakistan launched adult literacy program just after independence. But due to some uncertain consequences and tight financial conditions the government was unable to establish adult education or literacy program in a systematic way (UNESCO, 2010). In Pakistan a systematic approach was not adopted for improving adult literacy. The main strategy for adult literacy was limited to formal schooling from 1947 to 1998 (NCHD, 2013).

The adult literacy program has always been critiqued for its failure with a set of reasons such as lack of political will, inadequate funds allocation (hardly 1% of education budget) absence of coordination and organizational structure, centralized monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and above all lack of commitment. Adult literacy program is a challenging task focused on those illiterates who are psychologically depressed, emotionally disturbed, and economically poor (Bedder, 1991).

The constitution of Pakistan guarantees education to all: The State shall “*Remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period*” (Article 37-B, Constitution of Pakistan 1973). All education policies have given space to adult education. First education conference in 1941, emphasized on adult education and recommended developing a special section in the central advisory board for adult education. This conference also asked for a survey in all parts of Pakistan; training of teachers for adult literacy and developing material for teachers. The conference also recommended that radio broadcasts and other audio visual aids may be used for the purpose of adult literacy (Educational Conference, 1947). In 1981 a step was taken in this regard by the National Commission for Literacy and adult Education in a proper way. The Commission arranged the first national literacy plan. Though the plan was approved by government, but it was not properly executed due to some problems (PACADE).

The government of Pakistan gave due attention to adult literacy program and planned adult literacy centers through National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) at 104 districts in 2006. The purpose of these centers was to provide basic reading, writing and numeracy skills and special emphasis is being given on the literacy of women. NCHD established 164,190 adult literacy centers in all districts of Pakistan. These center give adult education to men and women between the ages of 11-45. There is a specially designed curricula for the purpose. These centers are established with the help of communities. They provide space for the centers. The objective of these centers to enable the illiterate adult to get literacy equivalent to grade 3. NCHD enrolled more than 3.8 million illiterate persons. One of the target of NCHD was to achieve the Millennium Development

Goal of Pakistan and that was to achieve 86% literacy rate by 2015. NCHD tries to retain students in primary schools and also provide basic literacy to illiterate people. In this regard, NCHD has established 6 centers in district Malakand, 3 each for male and female illiterate persons. The basic aim of adult literacy program was to increase the overall literacy rate to 86% till the year 2015. The curriculum is designed for easy learning and functionality, thereby enhancing retention. Communities are mobilized to provide space as well as the teachers. Women are encouraged particularly to join these centers, as it will bring a positive change in their lives. The learners are enabled to read a simple text of Urdu, write a simple letter and do simple arithmetic. Due to the efforts of NCHD 2.5 million adults became literate, out of which 90% were females, Training of more than 150,000 teachers on Adult literacy teaching techniques (NCHD, 2013).

As mentioned earlier NCHD has established adult literacy centers in various districts. Similarly, six schools have been established at district Malakand. The study examines the effects of adult literacy on the literacy and conditions of women.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study explored impacts of adult literacy centers on woman in District Malakand Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Population & Sampling**

The students of adult literacy centers of District Malakand constituted the population of the study. Malakand is a hilly area, its total population is 7 20, 295 according to the census 2017 and it is situated in the north of Pakistan. There were total 3 centers for women and each center had about 20 women as adult learners. Sampling means a small representative section of a larger group which represents population. The researchers selected 10 women through randomly from each center. The result obtained from the study was applied on the whole population of District Malakand.

### **Methodology**

The primary data were collected with the help of a focus group discussion. Focus group discussion is intensive discussion on an issue (Creswell, 2015). There were 6 centers in district Malakand, there each for male and female. A group of 10 women in each female center was collected for focus group discussion.

### **Procedure**

Questions were asked from the participants keeping in view the objectives and relevant literature. The participants were inquired about their intent and what they

got from the adult literacy program. Before starting the discussion the consent form was filled from all the participants. The names of the participants have not been shown. The researcher worked as moderator, the second person noted the discussion and another person video recorded the statements.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

During the group discussion field notes were taken and the discussion was also recorded. After each group discussion the recorded data were transcribed verbatim. Data was verified by comparing the field notes and video.

### **Data Analysis Process**

All transcriptions and field notes were read by the researchers. Each individual questions from the 3 focus groups was read again and again for getting the correct point of view

### **Data Reduction Strategies**

Three stage approach was adopted for data reduction.

1. The narrative of the participants was changed into a simple description.
2. Description was categorized under one theme.
3. Representative quotations were also added in the various response categories, themes and patterns emerged from the data

### **Credibility**

Data from the records and field notes were compared and the transcripts were re-read by the researchers. The data were also discussed with a few participants. A few major themes emerged.

### **Summary & Conclusion**

Findings and conclusions were drawn on the basis of analysis of data which is consequently followed by the recommendations.

### **Data Analysis**

The first theme which emerged from the discussion was support for the adult literacy program. It was concluded from the discussion that the respondents were very satisfied for the centers in their villages and they felt positive change in their lives. As one woman said, "The centers have given us new life".

Second, there are villages and women don't have any proper system for meeting each other except death and marriage ceremonies. When question was related to the social life of the women. They were very happy. The centers brought them together and developed unity among them. "*We learn a lot from each other*", said one woman.

Third, when they were asked about awareness about education, they all said with one voice that adult literacy program has created awareness among them about education. Now, they have become more conscious about education.

Fourth, it came to know that all of them were unable to read and write or read newspaper but now all of them said that they have learnt reading, writing and they could read Urdu newspaper. Now, they are able to read utility bills and they can keep record if they lend something or borrow something from neighbors or relative.

Fifth, one question was related to the social aspect. It was asked if the centers brought any change in their social lives. They said that they have become more social and tolerant. As they said together, learnt from each other as well as from the simple stories in the courses. All these have brought positive change in their character.

Sixth, all of them were jubilant about being literate. They said they could guide their kids, attend phones if someone speaks Urdu or give them phone or message. They also talked now they could start small business in their homes because they can keep record and read prices. So, all these are positive changes which have taken place. Moreover, they got rid of the previous problem, like, they were unable to read bills, take messages, number and they were unable to start any business.

Seventh, when asked about the impact of adult literacy on their kids' education. They confirmed that now they can read their homework, their position in class, they could talk to teachers about their children. They said, "*We were unaware about the fruit of education*". "*Now our children cannot hide from school*", said one proud mother smilingly'. They also agreed that their adult literacy has given them new confidence. Moreover, their social status in society has also enhanced.

## **Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Findings**

1. All the participants supported adult literacy programs in Malakand district of Pakistan, they stressed on the continuity of centers.
2. Seventy percent people were of the opinion that Adult Literacy Programs are the only way of creating awareness in their lives.

3. All the women read and write so adult literacy centers are successful. It is a good strategy for making citizens literate.
4. Eighty Five percent of the respondents are agreed that adult literacy programs create and develop the ability and habit of commitment and compromise in the illiterate women of society.
5. All respondents showed a very positive attitude and they were very glade being a literate.
6. Ninety Five percent of the respondents faced many problems in their previous life, when they were illiterate. Now, they are enlightened.
7. All the respondents said that their education or educated personality had a great impact on their lives of their children.
8. Many respondents said that they were planning for some sort of business.

## **Conclusions**

1. On the basis of data analysis & findings, it is concluded that adult literacy centers has a great impact on the lives of illiterate women of district Malakand.
2. They could read, write and keep record of things in their daily lives.
3. The centers have become source of socialization, they gave them confidence. They could talk to anybody in the surrounding.
4. Their literacy had positive impact on their children. They could keep an eye on their homework or they could talk to their teachers.
5. They recommended that adult literacy is effective and such center should be made more effective.
6. After getting basic literacy, women could start their small scale business, like opening a small shop in their homes.

## **Recommendations**

Following are some of the recommendations:

1. The government may concentrate on adult literacy programs. There should be more such centers where desirous women can get basic literacy. Homes of people can be very easily used for the purpose. Government may pay some amount for the facility of a poor family. In this way a poor family will get some financial support and adult literacy would also improve.
2. They should start new programs and projects for illiterate adults. In the new program, the literacy should have such content which can improve hygiene of homes.
3. This process of learning may not stop, these women may be engaged in other such as post literacy program, Family Literacy program and computer literacy program.



4. Adult Literacy program should be arrangement as formal education. In fact alignment with formal education is not easy but it is a step to bridge the gaps between non-formal educations (Adult literacy program) with formal education (school system).
5. In this alignment age factors may effect learning and participation therefore, adult class may be treated separately and also course may be developed accordingly.

### **Suggestions for Implementation**

1. There are many financially weak families who offer their houses as female centers for adult literacy and they also offer services for teaching to adult illiterate women on meager wages or rent. The government may use this facility for enhancing literacy rate.
2. There are many retired female teachers in our society, they will also be willing to offer their services. Such people need encouragement from government side this is also a potential with the government or whoever works on adult literacy.
3. There are social welfare organizations in our villages of young educated youth. They have great enthusiasm for helping the needy people and educating people. They may also be engaged for the purpose.
4. The government may also offer small stipend to adults, this would encourage them for coming to the literacy centers and benefit from them and they are given some financial support for starting their small shop, buying a sewing machine or a few hens, etc., it would motivate other adults to join centers.
5. Adult literacy teachers need training. They may be given short training on how to teach adults, deal and keep them motivated for learning.

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