

Assessment of Functional Literacy Needs and Enrichment Interests of Commercial Drivers in North-Central Nigeria

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Abstract

Literacy, being a component of education, is supposed to empower individuals with knowledge, attitudes, skills and values for personal, interpersonal and community development. Individuals employ the attributes in a bid to obtain information, values and other skills for proper functioning. Therefore, functional literacy needs and enrichment interests among commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria were evaluated by this study. The descriptive research survey was employed in this study. The population under study was all literate commercial drivers and the study target population consisted of all inter-state literate commercial drivers of the three North-central Nigerian states. Six hundred and sixty respondents were sampled using the random sampling method. Data from the respondents were gathered with the help of a researcher-crafted questionnaire. Three-week interval test-retest process was utilized in order to find out the reliability of the tool and a score of 0.87 was found. It was discovered that the commercial drivers required functional literacy to a great extent for cultural ($\bar{x}=3.30$), civic ($\bar{x}=3.25$), economic ($\bar{x}=3.38$) and social ($\bar{x}=3.31$) development in every environment; they were moderately interested in developing their prose ($\bar{x}=3.12$), document ($\bar{x}=3.18$) and quantitative ($\bar{x}=3.28$) literacy domains. The inference of these findings was that planning and organizational functional literacy programs for the drivers, especially for economic development and quantitative domain, were called for. The research implied that there should be an organized functional literacy program for the commercial drivers, taking into consideration their economic development and quantitative literacy.

Keywords: domain, driver, enrichment interest, functional literacy, higher illiteracy

Introduction

Giving people the knowledge, attitudes, abilities, and values they need to grow as individuals, as well as people in their communities, is the overarching goal of literacy. In order to prepare people for cultural, social, civic, and economic roles and growth in the modern day, it is essential that they possess the fundamental literacy abilities of reading, writing, and numeracy. It can be observed that literacy in the modern digital age is irreplaceable as a common tool for the development of every aspect of development. Its impact has attracted growing scholarly interest in studies, especially after UNESCO's release of research findings making a strong link between

illiteracy and some issues like poverty and infant mortality. Literacy, although a foundation of overall development, exists alongside illiteracy as a significant inhibitor of any form of development and change (Ayodele & Adedokun, 2013).

Furthermore, literacy is classified into three main domains. These are quantitative, document and prose literacy (Bravo, Contreras & Osvaldo, 2002; Baer, Kutner & Sabatini, 2009; Perry, Shaw, Iyanyuk & Tham 2018). Document literacy comprises information in various formats or discourse in discontinuous forms; prose literacy covers texts in continuous forms, while quantitative literacy consists of arithmetic or numeral operations in printed materials. The three types of literacy are used for determining functional literacy principals, practice, needs, and interests of people, professions, community and societies.

Literacy functions as a dynamic social activity, serving as a means for reshaping communities across various spheres—cultural, civic, economic, political, technological, agricultural, educational, and spiritual. This suggests that literacy extends far beyond the elementary acts of reading, writing, and arithmetic; it permeates diverse fields and occupations, aiming at comprehensive personal and societal advancement. It also implies that literacy holds true significance only when directed at enhancing the intellectual, emotional, and physical capacities of individuals, thus enabling them to contribute meaningfully to collective progress. In this light, while mastering fundamental literacy is essential in the present era, it becomes ineffective if not actively integrated into everyday experiences. Its practical application is what renders it essential for both individual growth and national progress. This broader perspective on literacy is known as functional literacy.

Functional literacy, a concept developed under UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment, refers to the approach and content of acquiring reading and writing abilities that equip individuals for employment and skill training, ultimately boosting personal productivity (UNESCO, 1960). According to Ozenc and Dogan (2014) and Olaniran (2020), functional literacy represents an advanced stage where one not only possesses basic literacy competencies but also applies them in real-world social, economic, and cultural contexts. They emphasize that the key aspect of functional literacy lies in transitioning from skill acquisition to practical use in everyday settings.

By implication, functional literacy is a term that describes the frequent and lifetime use of fundamental literacy abilities (reading, writing, and maths) in day-to-day activities for the development of individuals, relationships, and society. People are meant to use these competencies to gain access to knowledge, develop values, and obtain more skills that enable them to participate

effectively and productively in the economic, social, cultural, political, and civic life of their society. Functional literacy and general literacy are different not just in acquiring basic skills, but also in using them in functional contexts to carry out activities and obtain more. For instance, UNESCO (1978) has made a difference between a person who is just literate and another who is functionally literate. A literate person can read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life, but a person who is functionally literate participates in all areas where literacy is essential for functioning effectively in all settings.

It is clear that practical literacy and personal development pursuits hold significant value due to their profound impact on comprehensive human advancement. They operate as instruments for individual growth, social interaction, and national progress. Commercial vehicle operators play a crucial part in the socio-cultural, political, and financial evolution of any community. As such, their practical literacy requirements and developmental interests—particularly within the North-central region of Nigeria—deserve focused academic inquiry. Drivers must stay informed in this rapidly evolving world, where literacy plays an indispensable role, especially in the age of swift digital transformation and technological advancement.

Moreover, the nature of their profession—as consistent users of the road network—requires a sound understanding of traffic protocols and safety measures. Their contributions to national progress through transportation justify a study dedicated to exploring their literacy gaps and interests. Numerous scholarly works have addressed adult learning, job-related education, and road safety training. Some researchers have emphasized practical literacy as a means of empowerment (Obanya, 2004; Onuka & Akinyemi, 2012; Olaleye & Adeyemo, 2012; Shipra, 2012; Ozenc & Dogan, 2014), while others have explored its relevance in employment and workplace competence (Bravo, Contreras & Osvaldo, 2002; Oreh, 2006). Additional studies have examined adult learners' developmental interests (Lawal, 2000; Business Innovation & Skills, 2013; UNESCO, 2013; Olaniran, 2020) and the traffic behaviors or socio-economic features of drivers (Ipingbemi, 2008; Ismail & Akanbi, 2010; Akinmusere & Oladumoye, 2011; Onuka & Akinyemi, 2012). However, to the best of the researcher's awareness, limited attention has been given to the practical literacy needs and personal growth interests of commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria. This oversight has created a scholarly gap that this study aims to address.

This study is grounded on the sociological theory of functionalism and the sociolinguistic theory of literacy. Functionalism is a foundational concept in sociology that focuses on broad societal structures and examines how smaller segments connect within this larger framework (Schaefer, 2005). It views society as an integrated whole, sustained by the roles played by its

different elements such as institutions, traditions, and shared values. Similar to system-based models, functionalism likens society to a living organism, where the health of the entire system depends on the proper operation of each individual part.

This perspective treats society as a structured network made up of mutually reliant and interlinked components, with institutions forming key elements of this organized setup. It emphasizes that the broader system derives meaning and function from the combined efforts of its various segments. Alhassan (2012) explained that a shift in one part typically causes adjustments in others, reflecting the interconnected nature of the system. Commercial drivers, as members of this social network, engage with their families, clients, colleagues, professional groups, and regulatory bodies such as VIO and FRSC. They also maintain ties within their residential and communal environments, contributing to development on personal, communal, and national levels. Consequently, any disruption in their lives—be it within family settings, workspaces, or community environments—has broader implications for society. For example, when commercial drivers organize a strike, it often disrupts several areas of national life, particularly economic activities, underscoring their significance within the societal framework.

Commercial drivers are an important social group to the functionalist sociological theory. They also belong to primary social institutions, economic and religious. They are an important social organ that is very essential to the free flow and overall advancement of society. In order to carry out their roles efficiently—not just at the workplace but also in the home and in the general community—commercial drivers need functional skills for overall personal, interpersonal, national, economic, social, civic, and cultural development. Therefore, the present study attempted to determine their functional literacy needs and enrichment interests with a perspective to making a contribution to the development of a customized functional literacy program for this significant sector of the population.

Specifically, the functionalist theory is relevant to this study because commercial drivers are part of the socio-economic group and they have different organs that function for the effectiveness of the group. The organs are distinct unions or organisations such as National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Road Transport Employers' Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) and Nigerian Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO); intra-state drivers; inter-state drivers; town service drivers and chauffeurs or personal drivers. So, the commercial drivers can be more operative and efficient if the organs individually and jointly function. To

achieve the efficient functioning of their organs, commercial drivers need to enrich their functional literacy interests and practices.

Also, sociolinguistic incorporates linguistic and social variables that influence the relationship of the society and language. It is about language and social man and that neither of these exists without the other: there can be no social man without language, and no language without social man (Malthiessen, 2009). Since sociolinguistics expounds the relationship between language and society, it is a vital principle used in exploring literacy. The sociolinguistic theory can thus be used in investigating in literacy needs, practices and interest of people. The sociolinguistic theory of literacy explains writing, reading and numeracy as skills in relation to their uses in society. Theory explains in detail the social uses of languages (Chambers, 2002), relationships between linguistic and social structure (Gumpers, 1971), and connection between speech and social behaviour.

Sociolinguistic theory, as proposed by Stubbs (1980), is a foregrounding theory of literacy because it provides both social and linguistic resources that enhance literacy practices for total development in the society. Based on the theory, Scribner (1988) presented literacy through three metaphors. Scribner (1988) referred to literacy as adaption, state of grace and power. Literacy is adaption for providing the functional skills required for an active performance of the daily activities of people; literacy is a state of grace for serving as a liberal type of education; and literacy is power for being as a tool for people's emancipation and resource for meaningful transformation of society. Moreover, the sociolinguistic theory is also relevant in the current study because the theory gives a researchable underpinning on which the functional literacy needs of commercial drivers would be determined considering language as a medium of making meaning in print. This implies that how commercial drivers employ reading, writing and numeracy skills decode and encode meaning without undermining social factors. Thus, the functional literacy needs and interests of the commercial drivers were determined, therefore leading to suggesting a programme on functional literacy for them.

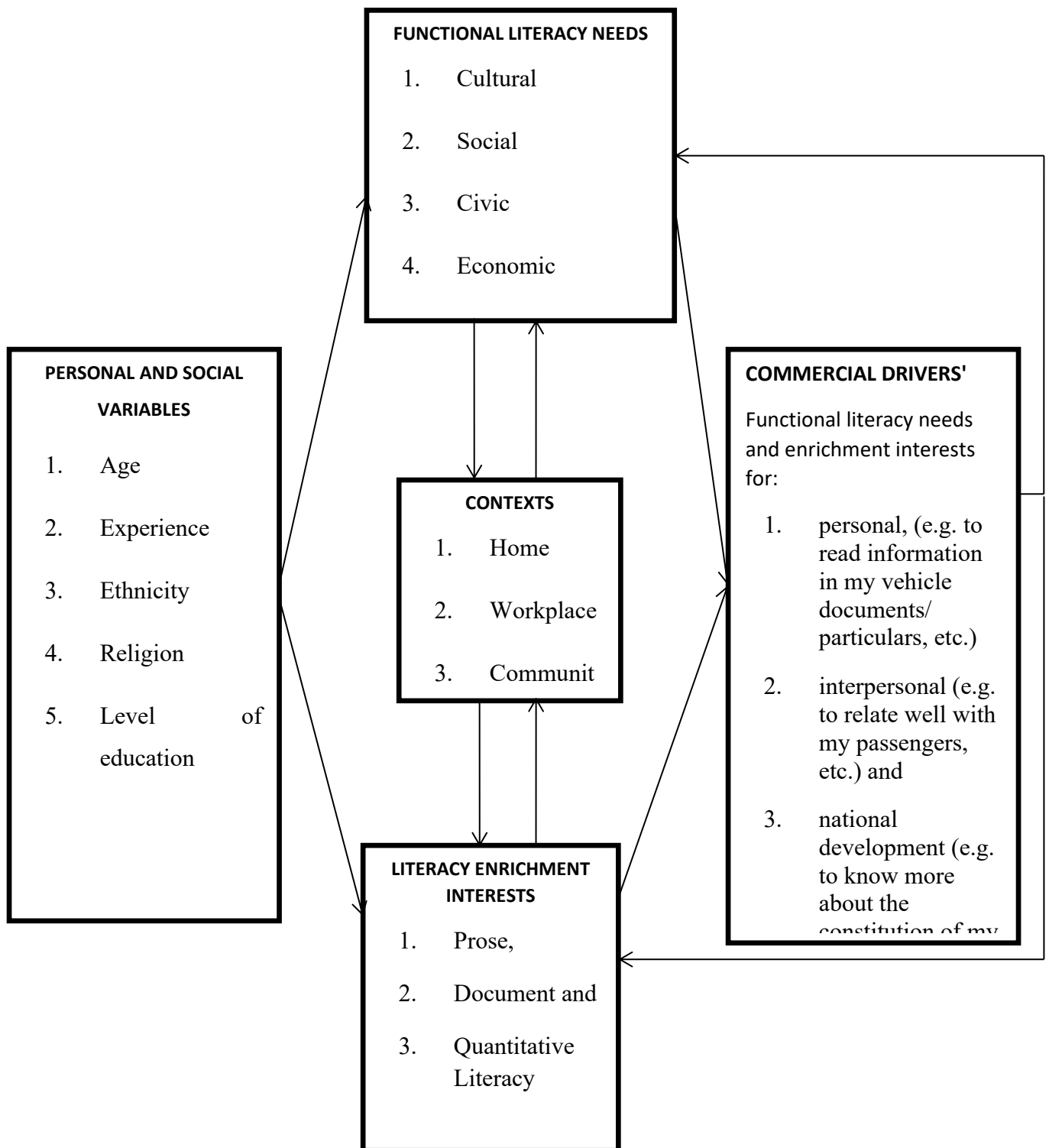


Fig. 1: Model of Functional Literacy Needs and Enrichment Interests of Commercial Drivers and Variables of Influence

The conceptual framework is derived from the reviewed literature. The model presents personal and social variables that can influence commercial drivers' functional literacy needs and

enrichment interests. Home, workplace and community as social settings also are determinants of the level of their functional literacy needs and the choice of the enrichment interests. Moreover, writing, reading and numeracy are the literacy skills classified under prose, quantitative and document domains explained in form of enrichment literacy interests in the present study.

The model presents commercial drivers' functional literacy needs and enrichment interests in connection to development ranging from personal to national form. The development can enable them to further determine literacy needs in different settings such as home, place of work and community, and in turn decide their choices of enrichment literacy interests for the total development, as shown by the feedback loops correspondingly. This model is a road-map for the conceptualization, general orientation and methodology of the study for achieving its purposes.

Therefore, the model is foregrounded in the functionalism, a sociological theory, and the sociolinguistic theory of literacy. The reason is that commercial drivers are a very large socio-economic group and they need to carry out economic, civic, social and cultural functions using skills of writing, reading, and numeracy in different social contexts for individual and collective development.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to assess functional literacy needs and enrichment interests of commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria. Based on the purpose, the following research questions and were formulated to direct the cause of this study and answered.

- a. What are the functional literacy needs of commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria?
- b. What are the enrichment interests of commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria?
- c. What are the implications of answers to the foregoing questions for the development of a functional literacy programme for the commercial drivers?

Methodology

A descriptive research survey was employed in this study in order to assess needs and interests of a large number of people such as commercial drivers. The population of the study was all literate commercial drivers in Niger, Kwara, and Kogi States of North-central Nigeria. The population of the study was all literate inter-state commercial drivers in the three states. Six hundred and sixty (660) respondents were sampled as the study sample. This sample size was intentionally limited to 660 because a structured interview schedule was used to collect data, and most of the respondents had only rudimentary reading skills. The sample was selected using a random sampling method and covered twelve (12) cities in the three states of the geo-political zone.

A researcher-designed questionnaire/structured interview was used to collect the data from the respondents. The questionnaire items were structured on the Likert model of None (1), Little (2), Much (3) and Very Much (4) for Section on Functional literacy", and Never (1) Low (2), Moderate (3) and High (4) for Section on Enrichment Literacy Interest. The questionnaire was administered to the commercial drivers that could read with considerable comprehension, but given as a structured interview to the ones with rudimentary level of reading skills. This instrument was validated by four experts in the Departments of Arts Education and measurement and evaluation for content and structural assessment. The test re-test type of a three-week interval was used to ascertain the level of the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to fifty-five commercial drivers selected from the study population in Benue State using incidental sampling technique. The scores got from the sets of administrations were correlated with the Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient statistic and a value of 0.87 was obtained.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical method. The percentage was used to analyse the demographic data. The three research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The critical ranges of scores on a four-level scale were employed to draw inferences from the mean scores on the research questions. The inference is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Table of Inference

Critical Range	Inference
0.1-1.4	None
1.5-2.4	Little/Low
2.5-3.4	Much/Moderate
3.5-4.4	Very Much/High

Content analysis was employed to examine the responses provided to the two open-ended items in the questionnaire so that the outcome was used to confirm or disconfirm the findings on the quantitative data.

Results

Although the sample size for the study was meant to be six hundred and sixty (660) literate commercial drivers, six hundred and forty-eight (648) questionnaires were actually retrieved. Out of these, twenty-six (26) were excluded because of incomplete answers. A number of the properly filled questionnaires were collected using the application of structured interviews, which were conducted for respondents with poor reading ability and a broadly unwilling reading attitude.

Therefore, six hundred and twenty-two (622) effective responses were employed for analysis, translating to a 96% retrieval rate and a 94% effective sample rate. The study's research questions were answered based on these responses. To enable the interpretation of the mean scores achieved from the research questions, critical value ranges premised on a four-point Likert scale were used, as earlier described in Table 1.

Research Question 1: What are the functional literacy needs of commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria?

Table 2: The Functional Literacy Needs of Commercial Drivers in North-central Nigeria (N=622)

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Inferences
A. Cultural Development					
	I need literacy skills so that I can:				
1.	learn more about my culture.	3.43	0.82	6th	Much
2.	get close to my God.	3.48	0.83	3rd	Much
3.	learn more about the culture of people.	3.06	0.91	20th	Much
4.	participate in cultural activities in my community.	3.24	0.85	15th	Much
B. Civic Development					
5.	be more familiar with my rights.	3.50	0.74	2nd	Very Much
6.	defend myself before FRSC, Police, VIO and other related agencies.	3.45	0.77	4th	Much
7.	protect rules and regulations of my union/association e.g. NARTO, NURTW, RTEAN, etc.	3.45	0.76	4th	Much
8.	relate well with my passengers.	3.40	0.77	7th	Much
9.	understand the difference between my privileges and rights.	3.31	0.84	13th	Much
10.	abide by the Highway code.	3.35	0.82	11th	Much
11.	vote rightly in elections.	3.22	0.90	16th	Much
12.	know more about the constitution of my country.	3.19	0.96	18th	Much
13.	be more law-abiding.	3.25	0.93	14th	Much
14.	be an active member of a political party.	2.76	1.09	22nd	Much
15.	contest for a leadership post in my union/association.	2.91	1.13	21st	Much
C. Economic Development					
16.	enhance the quality of my job.	3.44	0.76	5th	Much

17. determine my income and expenditure rates.	3.32	0.82	12th	Much
18. enhance my standard of living.	3.38	0.81	8th	Much
19. regulate my family finance.	3.35	0.86	11th	Much
D. Social Development				
20. relate well with my family.	3.51	0.77	1st	Very Much
21. maintain good ties with co-drivers.	3.24	0.79	15th	Much
22. maintain good relationship with passengers.	3.31	0.83	13th	Much
23. acquire knowledge and skills on first Aid.	3.21	0.91	17th	Much
24. maintain good relationship with my neighbor.	3.31	0.79	13th	Much
25. contribute to the development of community literacy.	3.18	0.91	19th	Much
26. enlighten people about sound healthy living.	3.36	0.89	10th	Much
27. promote a safe environment.	3.37	0.86	9th	Much

Table 2 shows that twenty-seven items were on the literate commercial drivers' functional literacy needs and were ranked positions from 1st to 22nd. According to the data presented, Items 20 (related to "social development"), 5 (concerning "civic development"), and 2 (focused on "cultural development") occupied the top three positions in the ranking. Specifically, Item 20 ("I need functional literacy to relate well with my family") under the social category and Item 5 ("I need functional literacy to be more familiar with my rights") under the civic category recorded the highest average ratings of 3.51 and 3.50, respectively—placing them first and second. These findings indicate that literate commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria strongly expressed the importance of functional literacy in fostering better family relationships and understanding their civic entitlements. The mean scores, which fall within the defined range of 3.5 to 4.4, signal a "Very Much" level of need for functional literacy in these areas. Thus, the evidence from Table 2 suggests that while respondents generally acknowledged a considerable need for functional literacy across all assessed responsibilities, their strongest emphasis was on the areas of social and civic engagement, where the need was described as particularly high. In addition, the table below shows rank and inferences on the functional literacy needs of the respondents for civic, economic, social and cultural development.

Table 3: The Functional Literacy Needs of the Respondents for Development

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Inference
Cultural Development	3.30	0.59	3rd	Much
Civic Development	3.25	0.49	4th	Much
Economic Development	3.38	0.58	1st	Much
Social Development	3.31	0.56	2nd	Much
Cumulative Mean	3.30			MUCH

It can be seen from Table 3 that commercial drivers ranked the highest demand for functional literacy in economic development, followed respectively in decreasing order by social, cultural, and civic development according to the respective mean scores held in the first to fourth positions. Based on the critical point ranges provided in Table 1, all of the mean scores under the four developmental areas fall within the 2.5–3.4 range, suggesting that the respondents had a "high" need for functional literacy on all these domains. In addition to that, the total mean score of 3.30 confirms that the commercial drivers indicated a high need for functional literacy to sustain integrative development in different environments such as the home, working environment, society, and the general national environment.

Research Question 2: What are the enrichment interests of commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria?

Table 4: The Enrichment Literacy Interests of Commercial Drivers in North-central Nigeria (N=622)

S/N Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Inferences
A. Prose Literacy				
I have interest in increasing my literacy by:				
1. reading religious books/materials (e.g. Bible, Quran, etc.).	3.57	.70	1st	High
2. reading general news stories.	3.07	.90	17th	Moderate
3. reading write-ups on transport and transport-related issues.	3.24	.80	12th	Moderate
4. reading sports stories.	2.91	1.01	25th	Moderate
5. reading handbills.	2.87	.97	26th	Moderate
6. reading the highway operative matters.	3.05	.98	18th	Moderate
7. taking minutes of meetings at work.	2.98	.98	23rd	Moderate
8. reading about road safety issues.	3.35	.76	5th	Moderate
9. reading stories to my children.	3.27	.90	11th	Moderate
10. checking my children's daily school works.	3.32	.85	8th	Moderate
11. assisting my children with their assignments.	3.30	.87	9th	Moderate

12. writing official letters about issues or problems facing my community to Government.	2.92	1.01	24th	Moderate
13. taking statements in a police station when issues come up.	3.03	.96	20th	Moderate
14. writing reports on highway matters.	2.98	.94	23rd	Moderate
15. writing short stories for my children to read.	3.04	.99	19th	Moderate
B. Document Literacy				
I have interest in increasing my literacy by:				
16. reading instructions on medicines/drugs.	3.34	.90	6th	Moderate
17. reading car manuals.	3.12	.93	16th	Moderate
18. reading text messages via mobile phone.	3.23	.93	13th	Moderate
19. reading road maps.	3.16	.92	15th	Moderate
20. reading information in my vehicle documents/particulars.	3.44	.76	3rd	Moderate
21. reading warranty/guaranty conditions on spare parts/products that I buy.	3.33	.75	7th	Moderate
22. operating a functional bank account.	3.18	.94	14th	Moderate
23. filling forms to apply for or to renew driving licence, vehicle documents, number plate, etc.	3.35	.81	5th	Moderate
24. writing official/non-official letters.	3.00	.96	22nd	Moderate
25. writing text messages via mobile phone.	3.05	.97	18th	Moderate
26. maintaining my Facebook accounts.	2.77	1.15	27th	Moderate
C. Quantitative Literacy				
I have interest in increasing my literacy by:				
27. determining my speed by distance and hour.	3.35	.79	5th	Moderate
28. calculating my daily income and expenditure to determine profit or loss.	3.34	.75	6th	Moderate
29. determining the speed limit based on the types of road.	3.30	.85	9th	Moderate
30. determining the expiration dates on my driving licence and vehicle documents.	3.45	.77	2th	Moderate
31. determining interest on loans.	3.02	.91	21st	Moderate
32. determining the length of warranty/guaranty on spare parts/products I buy.	3.34	.74	6th	Moderate
33. calculating litres of fuel to buy correctly.	3.42	.79	4th	Moderate
34. filling receipts of purchases.	3.29	.88	10th	Moderate
35. issuing receipts to passengers.	3.04	1.00	19th	Moderate

Table 4 reveals that thirty-five items were designed to collect data about the enrichment literacy interests of the commercial drivers. Out of the items, only Item 1 (on "reading books/materials, e.g. Quran, Bible etc".) had the highest mean score (3.57) and ranked 1st. The topic of the item is prose literacy, and the respondents showed a "high" interest in improving their prose literacy, especially so that they would be able to read religious books like the Quran, Bible, and other such books. Items 30, 20, and 33—document and quantitative literacy-based—were ranked at 2nd, 3rd, and 4th position with mean values 3.45, 3.44, and 3.42. These items of questions dealt with practical driving-related knowledge such as the interpretation of automobile documents, driving licenses, and fuel consumption computation, which indicated a relatively good degree of interest among the participants, but not quite at the same level as for religious reading. All other products possessed distinguishing mean values and were ranked accordingly. As per the benchmark range in Table 1, all the items surpassed the 2.5 mark, describing at least "moderate" interest. The implication is that although the respondents' general enrichment interests in literacy were moderate, their interest in religious literacy was very high. The rank order and interpretive summary of the respondents' interests in the prose, document, and quantitative literacy areas are displayed below in the table.

Table 5: The Enrichment Interests of the Respondents on Literacy Domains

Literacy Domains	Mean	SD	Rank	Inference
Prose Literacy	3.12	0.54	3rd	Moderate
Document Literacy	3.18	0.58	2nd	Moderate
Quantitative Literacy	3.28	0.51	1st	Moderate
Cumulative Mean	3.19			Moderate

The table above indicates that quantitative and document literacy took the first and second positions respectively with the mean scores of 3.28 and 3.18. This confirms that the respondents were inclined towards enhancing their quantitative literacy followed by document and then prose literacy. Although this was the order of preference, all three areas have one interpretation in common—"moderate" enrichment interest. This suggests that in various contexts—be it home, work, community, or national—the respondents manifested a continuing, moderate degree of interest in enhancing their prose, document, and quantitative literacy skills as specified by the nature of the items assessed. In addition, the cumulative mean (3.19) for all the mean scores of the three domains was within the critical range of 2.5-3.4; this gave an inference that the respondents' interests in enriching their literacy were **moderate**.

Research Question 3: What are the implications of answers to the foregoing questions for the development of a functional literacy programme for the commercial drivers?

This research question was answered using mean ranking based on the sum of the results on the foregoing questions. This is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: The Cumulative Means of the Functional Literacy Needs and the Enrichment Interests

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Inference
Functional Literacy Needs for Development				
Cultural Development	3.30	0.59	3rd	Much
Civic Development	3.25	0.49	4th	Much
Economic Development	3.38	0.58	1st	Much
Social Development	3.31	0.56	2nd	Much
Cumulative Mean	3.30			MUCH
Enrichment Interests in Literacy Domains				
Prose Literacy	3.12	0.54	3rd	Moderate
Document Literacy	3.18	0.58	2nd	Moderate
Quantitative Literacy	3.28	0.51	1st	Moderate
Cumulative Mean	3.19			MODERATE

The total mean of 3.30, within the 2.5–3.4 critical zone, indicates that commercial drivers perceived an extensive need for functional literacy in economic, social, cultural, and civic domains, with preferred wishes as seen in Table 6. Similarly, their mean enrichment interest in prose, document, and quantitative literacy domains was 3.19—within the same critical range—suggesting that their enrichment interest in those domains was moderate. Among the territories, quantitative literacy elicited the most attention from the drivers.

Of the 622 participants, 211 filled in the open-ended section of the questionnaire. These qualitative responses were coded into theme areas aligned with economic, social, civic, and cultural development needs. Over-all content interpretation reveals that most of the respondents expressed awareness of the importance of functional literacy and concern for developing their skills in various life settings, e.g., at home, in work, in community, and at the national level. The majority of the commercial drivers indicated that they needed functional literacy skills for their economic development with highest priority in financial and occupational literacy, and trade or entrepreneurship, mechanical skills as well as management skills. The data indicated that a large

number of them needed literacy skills on how to obtain loan, read and comprehend the terms and conditions for it.

On social development, the majority of the commercial drivers stated that they needed functional literacy to improve their interactional skills while a few of them indicated fashion skills as a means to enhance their social belonging. In addition, the majority of the young commercial drivers, especially whose age and driving experience are within 25-35 and 0-10 respectively, needed computer, digital and informational literacy skills for social networking, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Imo, Instagram and Twitter. The qualitative findings showed that several commercial drivers noted the lack of functional literacy needed to comprehend health-related information. Some of them wished to be offered free medical check-ups, including vision, hearing, blood pressure, and even cognitive assessments, just like other drivers who are employed by the government. Concerning civic education, a few drivers pointed out the necessity of acquiring legal literacy to participate meaningfully in the union's bylaw constitution in order to properly and confidently cite and use the documents when needed. Moreover, a good proportion of them pointed out the lack of functional literacy necessary for the safe operational driving and road safety sensitization among their colleagues.

Interestingly, the need expressed by 81 respondents, forming 38 percent of those who undertook the open-ended questions, wanted an adult learning programme that is less intrusive to their work schedule. Overall, the data seemed to underline the need for functional health literacy, alongside other forms such as financial, occupational, mechanical, digital, familial, information, legal, and technology literacies. They also pointed out the need for advanced education about and skills for effective communication, relations, management, entrepreneurship, and even fashion.

These qualitative insights correspond with the quantitative results, which emphasized the need for functional literacy in culture, society, economy, and civic domains at varying levels including home, work, community, and even at the national level. Moreover, the drivers indicated a desire to improve their literacy skills through reading religious texts, storybooks, sports magazines and also using social media like WhatsApp, Facebook, Imo, Instagram, Twitter. In addition, the drivers preferred to improve their financial literacy through workshops and awareness campaigns. Qualitatively and quantitatively, it was established that the drivers' motivation to enhance their functional literacy skills is moderate with some substantive motivation.

Discussions of Findings

The result showed that commercial drivers needed functional literacy to a great extent in order to facilitate their economic, social, cultural, and civic empowerment in several contexts, such as the home, workplace, community, and the nation in general. The finding is foregrounded by the sociological theory of functionalism which claims that a society is a body with different organs and the effective functioning of the body (society) depends on the proper conditions and functioning of its organs. Functionalists also understand society to be a system made up of different parts that are harmonized together and work interdependently. Social institutions are considered as structures which serve to preserve and enhance the order and coherence of the system. The theory considers each subsystem and the role it performs in terms of the health and continuity of the system. It focuses on the whole system (macro) and its elements (micro) where he states that the system is powerful and exists due to the interdependence of its parts. Under this perspective, society works as one and flows as one system that is maintained and operates through the synergy and proper functioning of all its parts. The commercial drivers serve as a social group carrying out some responsibilities, such conveying goods and services from across and within the society, inevitable to the economic, educational, civic, and cultural development.

The study further revealed that North-central Nigerian commercial drivers exhibited a moderate level of eagerness to enhance their functional literacy proficiency. This interest was across prose, document, and numerical literacy domains, as well as personal, professional, communal, and national contexts. The theory of literacy in sociolinguistics is particularly relevant to this finding since it views literacy as a social and linguistic practice whereby meaning is created through the use of language in written or printed form. The theory aligns with the study's findings insofar as it emphasizes reading and writing as not individualistic skills but as useful when utilized to transform society for the better (Blommaert, 2012). Here, literacy practices are both linguistic resources and social mechanisms that reflect and create the contexts of their use. Sociolinguistics highlights how language use is influenced by social structures, leading to variation in communication according to background, age, experience, gender, level of education, situational context, and communicative style.

Most particularly, the participants were more interested in developing their quantitative literacy, followed by document literacy, then prose literacy. This result aligns with Bravo, Contreras, and Osvaldo's (2002) contention that the prose, document, and quantitative literacy domains are crucial for individuals to be able to perform effectively in society. In addition, achievement of these areas

of literacy assists people in developing their personal, interpersonal, and national growth in all settings. Speaking to these areas—encompassing reading, writing, numeracy, graphicacy, and measuracy as basic skills—Obanya (2004) argues that people ought to learn these skills in an active way since they are very significant in obtaining life skills, socio-economic skills, and lifelong learning. According to him, this is because they are fundamental to the life skills, the socio-economic skills and the lifelong learning skills. The findings of this study show that commercial drivers found the literacy domains to be significant in various contexts, reflecting Obanya's (2004) findings. The drivers were moderately interested in acquiring the domains, with a comparatively higher interest in quantitative literacy. This means that drivers were most interested in acquiring essential workplace competencies—reading, writing, and numeracy, reflecting Bhola's occupational literacy, which involves the application of literacy to improve work performance and productivity.

Qualitative feedback also showed that the majority of the drivers, especially the young ones, were keen on improving their reading and writing skills through the use of digital communication devices like WhatsApp, Facebook, and email. They were also keen on improving their skills in interpreting text and messages. These results supported trends in the quantitative data which indicated that there was an overall willingness among drivers to enhance their literacy levels through avenues such as adult education, seminars, conferences, and literacy courses incorporated into meetings and awareness drives organized by traffic, legal, and security agencies. However, what was discovered from field observation was a disturbing trend among some of the drivers—dislike for reading, with indication of slipping into functional illiteracy or aliteracy. For example, there were drivers who were unable to complete reading their questionnaires and had to be read to. This inability to sustain reading may partly explain their issues with comprehension and invites special literacy interventions to prevent further decline.

Conclusion

It was concluded in this study that the North-central commercial drivers in Nigeria needed functional literacy much in various contexts including workplace, home and community for cultural, economic, social and civic development for enhancing their personal, interpersonal and national growth as illustrated in the model above. The results show that commercial drivers had a high functional literacy need in all areas of development but ranked economic development and job performance as their first priority. The commercial drivers also demonstrated high interest in the development of their literacy, with highest interest in quantitative literacy, followed by

document then prose literacy. Significantly, commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria were most interested in functional literacy to enhance their knowledge of their rights. In addition, their top enrichment interest was learning to read religious books and texts, including the Bible and the Quran.

Implications of the Findings

The conclusions of this research on the functional literacy needs and enrichment interest of commercial drivers in North-central Nigeria have significant implications for adult literacy program—particularly those organized for employees in developing nations like Nigeria. As the drivers' literacy needs are high while their enrichment wish is moderate, it becomes imperative to plan and implement literacy programs that are realistic and responsible. Such programs should give prominence to economic and social development issues over civic and cultural ones and emphasize quantitative literacy more than prose and document literacy. This is because it would also align with the identified areas of concern among the drivers in the research.

One such conclusion is the need to construct occupational literacy courses for adult workers, whose role is to impart the worth and potential of functional skills in improving work productivity and overall effectiveness. In addition, research indicates the need to initiate family and community-based literacy programs. Through the implementation of literacy practice at the family and community levels, adults can be oriented towards individual, relational, and national progress. Lastly, such initiatives are an actual way toward reducing the number of functionally illiterate adults and raising a generation more sensitive to the needs and benefits of functional literacy.

Recommendations

It was thus recommended that:

- i. a literacy programme should be organised for commercial drivers for social, cultural, civic and economic development by the literacy expert or organisation.
- ii. researchers and practitioners in literacy are urged to donate their time for community service by volunteering to organize and run functional or occupational literacy training for commercial drivers and, on a larger level, for artisans.

- iii. the relevant government agencies—such as the Federal Road Safety Corps, Vehicle Insurance Organisations, and Nigeria Police Force—should incorporate functional literacy modules in their public enlightenment programs to commercial drivers.
- iv. decision-makers, in discussion with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders no less significant, ought to be charged with initiating, funding, and developing policies that facilitate the introduction and execution of functional literacy programs for commercial drivers and artisans at large.

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