

PARENTS ROLE AND HOME ENVIRONMENT AS FACTORS OF DEVELOPING  
READING SKILLS OF STUDENTS IN SELECTED JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN  
GWAGWALADA AREA COUNCIL , ABUJA, NIGRIA.

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Abstract

This study surveyed parental and environmental contributions to the development of reading skills of Junior Secondary School Students in Gwagwalada Area Council of Abuja, Nigeria. The sample for the study involved 200 respondents, consisting of 50 Parents and 150 Junior Secondary School Students. Data collected via the two research instruments, developed and validated for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result revealed that though a majority of the parents sampled were making efforts to inculcate good reading skills in their children, this has not yielded the required result. Based on the findings, the study recommended more improvement on the reading environment among others.

**INTRODUCTION**

Reading is the process of communication through which most formal learning takes place. It involves understanding written language and interpreting them (Ajala, 1988). As a skill, children need to imbibe it early in life which should start at home with the parents as first teachers. Good books should equally be made available at home in order to arouse children's interest in reading. Children's books are mainly of two types, School books which are usually meant for utilitarian purpose and books of creative imagination which are not for any immediate utilitarian purpose, but serve as the means of self-development over a period of time.

Parents have a role to play in helping their children become good readers (Oyebola,O 2003). Many Nigerian parents once they get their children admitted into schools, feel that they have no further contributions to make towards their children's educational development. One of the important ways they can assist, is by stimulating their child's interest in reading. Studies have agreed with the fact that the social environment can contribute negatively or positively in reading skills development. It is common knowledge that those children whose parents read and who have lived in a family and social environment in which people read, read themselves. This is probably why children of illiterate parents are more handicapped on the issue of reading habit and culture than the parents who are literate. (Akanya 2010). The environment in which a child finds himself/herself equally has a lot of impact on his or her physical and educational development. The home environment is the child's first point of contact with the world and it is the primary educational unit for most children between ages 0-6 years. Reading is usually a private act, a personal and individual relationship with a book; but then it is the environment as long as it is favourable, which encourages the setting up of this relationship. (Apeji, 2011).

### **Home-Related problems militating against the development of reading skills in children**

- i. Parental example: Parents influence their children's reading habit in a number of ways. The first and foremost is by their examples. If they are associated with parents who read, they will realize the importance and imitate them.
- ii. Low literacy rate: A sizable percentage of parents whom we expect to support the development of good reading skills in their children are themselves unable to read and write.
- iii. Cost of books: According to (Andzayi 2002), the high cost of books either produced locally or imported into the country has made it very difficult for many Nigerian parents to purchase general reading books for their children.
- iv. Distractions: Children today spend a lot of their time engaging in activities such as listening to radio, watching films, making use of the Internet facilities etc. The likely result of this according to (Andzayi, 2002) is that they may not have adequate time for reading generally.
- v. Child labor and domestic chores: Owing to the low income rates in most homes, Children at times are made to help in order to increase the families income. (Fayose,1980). Among rural societies in particular and certain sectors of urban communities, child labour is exploited not as an expression of adult callousness but as a means of economic necessity.
- vi. Access to basic necessities of life: Due to poverty in the society, many parents are unable to provide their children with basic necessities of life such as food and clothing. According to Jegede, (1997), these basic amenities should be in place in order to create the right physical and mental environment for children to learn.

### **Developing reading skills**

Reading requires some skills in order to achieve maximum results. Three fingers should be behind the book. The book should not be too close to the eyes and it should not be too far either-about 9 inches to the face is recommended (Apeji, 1993). Books should equally be seen by both parents and children as an important assess to cherish. Because of this, they should be properly handled and stored. For effective faster reading skills' development, they following strategies are recommended;

Reading with more speed without losing meaning

Read at least 500 words per minute

Other activities required of readers include the following;

Read in phrases; read selectively; read with flexibility; read with concentration; read with self confidence; read with practices and habit formation etc.

### **Statement of the problem**

The learning process is essentially sequential and it involves three stages of acquisition, retention and recall, which are attained through reading. Many Nigerian children experience some difficulties in reading which discourage them from reading voluntarily. Based on this identified problems, there arose the need for this enquiry in order to examine the roles parents and the home environment plays in developing reading skills in children.

### **Objectives of the study**

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

Determine the frequency at which parents and children read.  
Ascertain whether Nigerian parents buy other general reading materials apart from school textbooks for their children.  
Assess the conduciveness of the Nigerian home environment for reading.  
Determine whether parents show good example to their children by reading.

### **Research questions**

What is the frequency at which Parents and children read?  
Do Nigerian parents buy general reading materials for their children apart from school textbooks?  
Is the Nigerian home environment conducive for interpreting written materials?  
Does Nigerian parents show good example to their children by reading in their presence?

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The study adopted and used a descriptive survey research design.

#### **Population/Sample**

The target population of the study consisted of all Junior Secondary School (JSS) Students and their parents in Gwagwalada Area Council of Abuja. One hundred and fifty (150) students were drawn from ten Junior Secondary Schools randomly selected for the study. Fifteen students were randomly chosen from each of the ten Junior Secondary Schools selected while fifty (50) Parents were purposively selected for the study. Five parents were randomly selected from each of the JSS. Therefore, a total of 200 respondents (ie 150 Junior Secondary School students and 50 parents) were used for the study.

#### **Data Analysis Technique**

The sampling techniques used for the study involved purposive and simple random sampling techniques. This is based on the fact that the fifty parents used for the study, were purposively selected based on satisfying the criteria that they, (the parents) must have Children schooling in the Junior Secondary Schools sampled for the study. Also, the simple random sampling technique was used to select the students used for the study.

#### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in collecting data for this study were two questionnaires titled Parents questionnaire and Students questionnaire which were developed by the researcher. The Students questionnaire consist of two sections A and B. Section A consist of personal data such as class, age etc, while section B consist of items soliciting for information on respondents reading skills development.

The second questionnaire which was designed for the parents also consist of two sections, A and B. Section A solicits for background information such as sex and employment status, while section B solicits for information on the parent's role in developing reading skills in their children. The two questionnaires were content validated by two experts in language education.

#### **Method of Gathering Data**

The researcher visited selected Junior Secondary Schools and copies of the questionnaire were administered with the assistance of the teachers. The Parents questionnaire was administered on

the selected parents through the secretary of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) in each of the selected Junior Secondary Schools. At the end of the administration of the research instrument, 145 out of the 150 students questionnaire were returned while 44 out of 50 parents questionnaire were also returned. This explained why the total number of respondents used for the study was 189(144 students + 45 parents). The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages.

### Finding and Discussion

The following results emanated from the study:

The tables 1a and 1b below respectively show the frequency distribution of respondents by schools and ownership and the employment status of the parents used for the study.

Table 1a: Frequency distribution of respondents by School and ownership.

S/N	Name of School	Ownership	Teachers Respondents	Students Respondents	Total
1.	Government Secondary School	Public	5	15	20
2.	Government Day Secondary School	Public	5	15	20
3.	Christ Academy	Private	5	15	20
4.	Gifted Secondary School	Public	5	15	20
5.	Christ the King College	Private	5	15	20
6.	Government Secondary School Giri	Public	5	15	20
7.	Government Secondary School Zuba	Public	5	15	20
8.	Star International School	Private	5	15	20
9.	Jolatson Secondary School	Private	5	15	20
10.	Suzz Tenderly Secondary School	Private	5	15	20
Total			50	150	200

Table 1a shows the names of schools and the ownership type of Schools used for the study. The table thus revealed that five publicly owned Schools and five private Schools were involved in the study. (table 1b)

Table 1b: Employment status of Parents respondents by nature of occupation

S/N	Nature of occupation	No	Percentage
1.	Civil servants	15	34.1
2.	Self Employed	10	22.7

3.	Private Employee	14	31.8
4.	Unemployed	5	11.4
Total		44	100

NB: Private employees are those employed in privately owned companies or industries or establishment.

Table 1b shows employment status of respondents parents by nature of occupation. The table revealed that Civil servants has 15 (34.1%) parents, self employed with 10 (22.7%) parents, while private employee and unemployed have 14 (31.8%) and 5 (11.4%) parents respectively.

Table 2a: Frequency and percentage distribution of Parents on their reading period

S/N	Frequency of reading	No of respondents	%
1.	Daily	15	34.1
2.	Weekly	12	27.3
3.	Monthly	2	4.5
4.	Occasionally	15	34.1
5.	Not at all	None	-
Total		44	100

Table 2a above shows the frequencies of reading of the Parents. These includes, daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally and not at all. There are 34.1percent of the parents that indicated that they read daily and occasionally respectively, while 27.3percent indicated that they read on a weekly basis and 4.5percent read monthly. None of them indicated not reading at all. This findings implies that the parents who should serve as role models to their children by reading in their presence have failed in this responsibility. This agrees with the findings of Akanya (2010) that those whose parents read and who lived in a family and social environment in which people read, read themselves.

Table 2b: Frequency and percentage distribution of students on their reading period

S/N	Frequency of reading	No of respondents	%
1.	Daily	44	30.3
2.	Weekly	25	17.2
3.	Monthly	21	14.5
4.	Occasionally	49	33.8
5.	Not at all	6	4.13
Total		145	99.9

Table 2b shows the students respondents frequencies of reading period. These includes, daily, weekly, monthly occasionally and not at all. There are 33.8percent of the students that indicated

that they read occasionally, 30.3percent read on a daily basis, 17.2percent of the students read on a weekly basis while 14.5percent read only once in a month. Unfortunately some do not read at all. This is 4.13percent of the respondents. The findings revealed that students in Junior Secondary Schools of Gwagwalada have not developed the reading skills and habit that will enable them to see and appreciate books as an important assess to cherish.

Table 3: Responses and percentage distribution of Parents role and the home in developing reading skills of children

S/N	Statements	Yes		No %		Total
		Freq	%	Freq	%	
1.	Purchase of general reading materials	32	72.7	12	27.3	100
2.	Quietness of the home for reading	35	79.5	9	20.5	100
3.	Good lighting situation at home	32	72.7	12	27.3	100
4.	Assist in explaining difficult words	37	84.1	7	15.9	100

The table above indicated that 72.7percent of parents buy general reading materials for their children while 27.3percent do not buy.

On the conducive nature of the home environment, 79.5percent of the respondents indicated that their home is conducive for carrying out reading activities, 20.5percent are of the opinion that their home environment is not conducive for reading.

Responses from Parents on the lighting situation at home indicated that 72.7percent are of the opinion that their home lighting situation is okay for reading while 27.3percent indicated that it is not.

There are 84.1percent of the Parents that are positive that they assist their children in explaining difficult words to them. Only 15.9percent of the respondents do not see any need for this assistance as a way of developing their children's reading skills. The findings of the study implies that majority of the parents assist in improving their children reading habit through provision of conducive environment and required guidance. This findings thus agrees with the views of (Apeji 2011) who reported on the importance of home environment in developing reading habit in the children.

Table 4: Students responses in relation to role of Parents and the environment

S/N	Statements	Yes Respondents		No Respondents		Total
		freq	%	Freq	%	
1.	Enough time for reading general materials	88	60.7	57	39.3	100

2.	Quietness of the home environment for reading	93	64.1	52	35.9	100
3.	Lighting situation at home	102	70.3	43	29.7	100
4.	My parents buy books and other reading materials for me	62	42.8	83	57.7	100

Table 4 indicated that 60.7percent of the students have enough time to read other general materials while 39.3percent responded no to that.

For the conducive nature of the home environment for reading, 64.1percent of the respondents indicated yes while 35.9percent indicated no.

Those that responded on the lighting situation at home indicated that 70.3percent are of the opinion that their homes are well illuminated, and 29.7percent said no to that.

There are 48.8percent of the student respondents that indicated that their parents do encourage them by buying books for them to read. A higher percentage of 57.2percent had a contrary view to that. The students corroborated the parents view that they have enough time to read other general materials and that their home environment is a bit conducive for reading. However, they had a contrary view on the parents support towards developing their reading skills by buying books for them to read. This could be as a result of the parents not reporting the truth in that aspect.

### **Conclusion**

Nigerian Parents in the Gwagwalada Area Council of Abuja have realized the need for commencing the development of their children's reading skills at home at an early stage, but the good example which they are supposed to show to their children is lacking. However, the home environment of these students in Gwagwalada Area Council Secondary Schools have been found to be partially conducive for their reading.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Parents should learn to read on a regular basis to enable their children imitate them.
- ii. Efforts should be made by Parents to purchase books and other reading materials for their children.
- iii. Parents should read along with children and explain difficult words to them.
- iv. Parents should give out books as gift to their children during their birthdays and other festive occasions.
- v. Supportive reading environment should be improved upon at home to enable children interpret written materials in a conducive environment.

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