

READING HABITS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

BY

OLUREMI A. ABIOLU, PhD
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, AKURE NIGERIA
Email: ijatuyioa@yahoo.com

Abstract

This survey investigated the reading habits of eight senior secondary school students in Ondo State Nigeria using a multistage sampling technique to draw three local government areas out of 18 in the State. Eight hundred copies of questionnaire were administered on 100 students from each of the eight schools sampled in a random manner. Findings show that textbook (81.8%) and novel (31%) were mostly read. Most respondents were active (50%) and moderate (31%) readers consulting school library (35.4%) and public library (14.9%) for their information needs. No significant difference between the reading habits of male and female students at $t(554) = -1.42, p < 0.50$ was found. Slight significant difference occurred between the reading habits of SSS 1, 2 and 3 students $F(2, 553) = 2.78, p < 0.50$. No significant correlation existed between students' age and reading habits, $R = 0.084, p < 0.50$. Significant correlation occurred between respondents' fathers' educational background and their reading habits. Significant correlation also occurred between respondents' mothers' educational background and their reading habits. Libraries should be well equipped to enhance reading among students and parents irrespective of their educational background should support their children's reading habits.

KEYWORDS: Readers, Reading habits, Reading Materials, Senior Secondary Schools, Students.

Introduction

Reading is regarded as cornerstone to learning. To gloss over the contributions of reading to childhood development is to become oblivious of reality. Reading and writing are two important aspects needed for literacy development in a person, reading however appears to be more associated with literacy. It is one of the basic skills that children are exposed to in early childhood that is, reading precedes writing in literacy development. It is regarded as the first button in the garment of education and any meaningful education can only take place with reading (Thanuskodi, 2011). Reading involves recognizing and pronouncing character(s) as well as the ability to grasp the meaning of the arrangement of those character(s) in the order in which they are (Gupta, 2010). Reading enables children to acquire new words, improve their vocabulary, and make them acquire good language skills and the variances of phonics (Yilmaz, 2009 and Gupta, 2010). Reading promotes concentration, self-training and self-learning in a child, induces fast learning and prevents a child from being diverted or spoilt (Gupta, 2010). Reading can actually become a habit when it involves skill or activity. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003), a habit is something that one does regularly or usually without thinking about it because you have to do it many times before. Reading habits in

any particular individual develops not just instantly but gradually during the course of time and it involves constant reading in a critical manner (Thanuskodi 2011, Oguz, Yildiz and Hayirsever, 2009). Ojerinde (2012) also opines that reading habit is the use of reading as a regular activity, the cultivation of an attitude and acquisition of skills that make reading pleasurable, regular and constant.

Yilmaz, (2009) did a study on the reading and library usage habits of students whose mother tongue is Turkish in Vienna, Austria. He found that students did not have sufficient reading and library use habits, and that they had serious problems with these. The study reported a significant relationship between students' reading habits and their language development. This is supported by Gupta (2010) when he states that reading not only improves a child's vocabulary or good language skills but also makes for a better grasping of the variances of phonics. His study also reveals that reading and library usage are contributory to the attainment of academic heights.

Kumar, Ansari and Shukla (2010) carried out a study on the reading habits of senior secondary students at Allahabad City in India. They found that the motives of reading among their respondents are getting information and improvement of their general knowledge. The study also showed that a large majority of the students studied between three to four hours daily and read materials related to their school subjects. They concluded that there is the need for students to improve their reading skills.

There is a body of literature showing controversial evidence in the decline of reading habits among youth. Some studies have reported a decline in the of youth. For example, Smithies (2012) in a study on reading habits reading habit at the university level in Papua New Guinea. His study found that youth read examination books. In a similar dimension in Nigeria, Iheancho (2007) reported that only 40percent of her study respondents were active readers.

Many factors were put forward as being responsible for the decline of reading habits among youth such as technological advancement. The advent of electronic media and the Internet has been credited to have a negative impact on reading and book readers (Yilmaz 2009; Admin 2011; and Upadhyay 2011). Other factors are the fact that students also may consider reading as a chore and not a pleasure or an informative activity (Smithies 2012); not giving prominence to reading (Admin 2011). Others are that the youth consider the path of reading to be solitary in nature unlike interactive chats on the Internet (Copperwiki, 2011). Reading at times may involve aloneness with books instead of being with friends and colleagues.

On the contrary, studies have shown that reading habit among youth is not on the declining state. An assessment of reading habits of 300 future classroom teachers in the context of their demographic features found that 54percent of the respondents read between six and twenty books in the last one year. Majority were made up of moderate and active readers (Oguz *et al.* 2009). Reporting a study on reading, risk and reality, Gilbert and Fisher (2011) found a far higher interest in reading among the students than is typically believed and therefore recommend steps for academic librarians to encourage reading for typical lifelong learning. Kumar *et al.* (2011) have suggested the need to study and record the reading habits of students to be able to make reasonable predictions about their success in their academic pursuit. This study therefore sets out to investigate the reading habits of senior secondary school students in selected schools in Ondo State so as to provide suggested solutions in terms of reinforcement and improvement respectively.

Research objectives

The objectives for this survey research are to:

1. find out the type of materials that students read;
2. find how many books students read on a yearly basis;
3. determine the average number of hours students spend on reading every week;
4. determine students' source of reading materials;
5. find out their motives for reading; and
6. ascertain if there are barriers to reading habits among respondents and make suggestions to their removal or reduction.

Research hypotheses

Five null hypotheses set for this study are as follows:

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the reading habits of male and female students.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the reading habits of senior secondary school 1, 2, and 3 students.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between students' age and their reading habits.

Ho₄: There is no significant correlation between mother's level of education and respondent's reading habits.

Ho₅: There is no significant correlation between father's level of education and student's reading habits.

Methodology

The study employed a survey design drawing its sample from senior secondary schools (SSS) 1, 2 and 3 students because they had undergone the junior secondary school and are preparing for their first external but international examination. The study used a multistage sampling technique. Three local government areas (LGAs) namely Ifedore, Akure North and Akure South out of 18 in Ondo State were selected for the study. From these, five senior secondary schools were randomly selected based on factors such as school type, giving room for both coeducational, public and private schools. Three single sex schools were purposively selected due to their being fewer in number and other factors former factors. A total of 800 students were randomly sampled using 100 copies of the instrument for each participating school. The instrument was a questionnaire which consisted of six sections: demographic variables, types of materials read, frequency of reading, purpose of reading, source of reading and barriers to reading. The instrument contained 25 items with choices from which respondents were to select ones which best described their mind. The instrument items were close- and open-ended types. Permission was taken from the school Principal or Vice Principal (academic) or any senior teacher assigned to give such permission in order before administering the respective copies of the questionnaire. Data collected from the survey research were analysed using SPSS.

Results and Discussion

Five hundred and fifty-six out of 800 copies of administered questionnaire were found analysable representing a 60percent return rate. Of the total respondents, 49.1percent were male while 50.9percent were female showing that male and female students were more or less evenly distributed. 37.2percent fell between the age range of 11 and 14 years, 60.6percent were between 15 and 18 years. Only 2percent were above 18 years. The overall mean age of respondents is 15 years.

Materials generally read by students

Students were asked what materials they read. Their responses are shown in Table1.

Table1: Type of Materials read by Students

Type of materials	Frequency	Percentage
Textbooks	451	81.8
Fiction/novel/storybooks	229	41.2
Magazines	125	22.5
Religious books	91	16.4
E-books	77	13.8
Journals	76	13.7

Here respondents could tick more than one material

From Table 1, students report that they read different kinds of information materials but textbooks (81.1%) relating to their subjects in class are the most widely read followed by fiction/novel/story books (41.2%). Others were read to lesser percentages. This finding is similar to what National Book Trust nationwide survey on reading habits among the youth found in India whereby three fourth of total literate youth in the country do not read books apart from textbooks whether classics or bestsellers Deccan Herald (2012).

Number of Materials/Books read over the last one year by Students.

Respondents were required to indicate the number of materials or books read over the last one year (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of Materials/Books read over the last one year by Students

No of Materials	Frequency	Percentage
0	53	9.5
1-5	53	9.5
6-20	172	31.0
Above 20	278	50.0
Total	556	100

Readers are categorised by ALA into seldom, moderate and active readers if they read five (5) books, between six (6) and twenty (20) books and above twenty (20) books per year respectively (Oguz, Yildiz and Hayirserver, 2009). From Table 2, it is revealed that 50percent of study respondents are constant readers, about 31% are moderate readers, 9.5percent are seldom readers while 9.5percent are non-readers. Considering the categorisation of ALA, majority could be regarded as active (50percent) and moderate (30percent) readers.

No of Hours Students spent on Reading

Survey respondents were asked the approximate number of hours spent on reading generally in a week. Table 4 shows their responses

Table 4: No of Hours Students spent on Reading

No of hours spent on Reading a week	Frequency	Percentage
0	23	4.1
1-2	58	10.4
2+-3	73	13.1
3+ - 4	89	16.0
4+ - 5	104	18.7
5+ - 6	44	7.4
6+	168	30.2
Total	556	100

Findings show that differences occur in the number of hours spent each week on reading varying from zero to six hours. Of the total number of participants, only 30.2percent spent six hours on reading, 7.4percent spent between 5 and 6 hours on reading, 18.7percent spent from four to five hours, and 16percent spent between three and four hours on reading.

Sources where respondents get their reading materials from

Students were required to state where they got their reading materials from. Responses are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Sources of Reading Materials for Students

Sources of Reading Materials	Frequency	Percentage
School library	197	35.4
Public library	83	14.9
Family collection	74	13.3
Friends and neighbours	59	10.6
Personal collection	58	10.4
Internet	26	4.7
No response	59	10.6
Total	556	100

Findings indicate that the school (35.4%) and public (15%) libraries are uppermost in the sources being sought by students and are gaining grounds. This is consistent with Kumar, Ansari and Shukla (2010) and Yilmaz (2009) who found that most students went to their school and public libraries for information materials. This is further suggesting that the concept of “Bring Back the Book” should be encouraged and sustained in Nigerian school and public libraries.

Students' motives for reading

Students were asked to indicate their motives or reasons for reading (Table 5).

Table 5: Students' Motives for reading

Motives/Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
For study	370	66.5
Pass examination	403	72.5
Get information	343	61.7
Improvement own knowledge	455	81.8
Hobby	174	31.3
None	26	4.7

Respondents could tick more than one response from the options given.

The reasons for reading were diverse and various. These include improving their knowledge (81.8%), passing their examination (72.5%), studying (66.5%), getting information (61.7%) and hobby (31.3%). Only 4.7percent read for no reason at all. The finding in Table 4 shows some justification for the report in Table 1 that textbook is the information material mostly read by the respondents since this is the basic reading book for senior secondary school education in Nigeria. This result corroborates Gilbert and Fister (2011) who found that in spite of the fact that students do not have much time to spend in reading for pleasure during that school year, they show positive feelings about reading which extends to reading choices.

Hypotheses testing

Five null hypotheses were tested in the course of the study. The data presented in Table 6 show the results of the testing of the first null hypothesis.

Table 6: Independent Samples Test

			t-test for Equality of Means			
			t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
How many Books you read over the last one year?	Equal variance assumed		-1.688	556	.092	-256
	Equal variances not assumed		-1.685	547.258	.092	-256

ANOVA has shown that there is no significant difference between the reading habits of male and female students at $t(554) = -1.41$, $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This finding does not support a study on reading habits of youth and children which reported frequent reading during spare time in larger proportions of girls than boys (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, 1997).

The result for the testing of the second null hypothesis is also displayed in Table 7.

Table: 7: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	17.691	2	8.845	2.784	.052
Within Groups	1757.302	53	3.178		
Total	1774.993	55			

The one way hypothesis ANOVA also reveals that there is a slightly significant difference in the reading habits of SSS1, SSS2 and SSS3 students, $F(2, 553) = 2.78, p < 0.05$. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected in favour of the alternative. However it is in contrast to Sternberg, Kaplan and Borch (2007) who noted a decline in the reading habits as students increased in the level of grades 4 to 12 and were also identified as struggling readers.

The results of H_{03} - H_{05} are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8: Correlations

	Reading Habits	
Age	Pearson Correlation	.060
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.160
	N	556
Level of Father's Education	Pearson Correlation	.097*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
	N	556
Level of Mother's Education	Pearson Correlation	.084*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049
	N	556

*shows significance at $p < 0.05$

H_{03} was accepted as no significant correlation between students' age and their reading habits was observed though there is a negligible negative correlation coefficient $(R) = -0.060, p < 0.05$. H_{04} and H_{05} are rejected as statistically significant correlation was found between the level of education of the mother and respondents' reading habits, and that of the father and the reading habits of respondents since correlation coefficient $(R) = 0.084, p < 0.05$ and $(R) = 0.097, p < 0.05$ respectively. It implies that the children of more educated parents read more than those that have less education.

Constraints to Reading Habits

Students were asked to pick what in their own opinion constituted constraints to their reading and reading habits (Table 9).

Table 9: Constraints to Students' Reading

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
Irregular power supply	371	66.7
I feel lazy	221	39.7
I like watching the television	180	32.4
I like using social media like facebook, email and twitter	150	27.0
I do not have enough time	145	26.1
I hate being alone with books	75	13.5
Reading materials are not available in my school library	74	13.3
I prefer staying with friends	63	11.3
I do not enjoy reading	61	11.0
I do not have reading materials	58	10.4

From Table 9, most of the respondents indicated power outage (66.7%) as the thorniest constraint to their reading habit followed by attitudinal behaviour such as feeling lazy (40%), watching TV (32.4%), using social media (27%), not having enough time (26.1%), hatred for being alone with books (13.5%). Other constraints include inavailability of reading materials in school library (13.3%), staying with friends (11.3%), not enjoying reading (11.0%) and not having reading materials (10.4%). The thorniest constraint is peculiar to Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this research suggest that the sampled senior secondary school students read more than previous studies have indicated. There seems to be more of active and moderate readers among the respondents and that they read for academic purposes or school subjects which have not been given much attention to by most studies. Also as was reported by some studies and in this study too, the school and public libraries were found to be the greatest source of getting reading materials by respondents. These libraries play a major role in facilitating the reading habits of students. The study revealed that the two null hypotheses of the five hypotheses for the study were not accepted and three were accepted. First, there was no significant difference between the reading habits of male and female students. Secondly, significant difference was observed in the reading habits of senior secondary school 1, 2 and 3 students. No significant difference was found between the respondents' age and their reading habits. Also significant correlation was observed between the educational level of respondents' fathers, and mothers and their reading habits. Students having parents with higher education were better readers. The thorniest constraint to reading was irregular electric power supply. Others relate to their attitudinal behaviour and technological advances. This survey focused solely on reading habits not on reading for pleasure even though students read much less for pleasure. Students read substantially for academic or school work and this is a pointer to the fact that reading is not only thriving as found in some studies but that it is not totally on the decline. Parents irrespective of their educational background should play significant role in enhancing the reading habits of their children or ward. However future research can look into reading for pleasure without any examination or school work in view, since good and versatile reading promotes good citizenry, leadership and consequently national development.

For an overall effective and efficient development of reading habits, academic and leisure reading must be developed. Both male and female students must be grafted into this process and the various interests on why students must read should be given adequate consideration. Library

collections must be tailored to this as well. Since textbook is the basic information material mostly read by students, it is important that school libraries be equipped with current and relevant ones by the parent authorities. While the thorniest barrier is a national problem, students must make the most of their time during the day. This can be done by useful investment of their day hours into gainful reading and using the library being a place often devoid of distraction. Also they must have the right attitude to reading. Parents generally have a role to play in that they should encourage their children or wards to read whether they themselves are educated or not. This will boost the students' academic pursuit. The reading habit or culture will be more imbibed and improved in the Nigerian youth.

REFERENCES

- Admin, (2011). Lack of reading habits in Pakistani youth. Retrieved from <http://zindadi/pakistan.com/lack-of-reading-habits-in-pakistan-youth> p.1 on 24 June, 2011
- Copperwiki,. (2011). Reading habits in children. Retrieved from http://www.copperwiki.org/index.php/Reading_Habits_in_Children pp.1-2 on 24 June, 2013
- Deccan Herald Saturday August, 2013. Youth have a poor reading habit NBT survey. Retrieved from www.deccanherald.com>Home>National pp.1-23 on 3 August 2013.
- Fong, I. O. P. (2011). A study of the reading habits and interests of urban working professionals, executives and managers. *Malaysian Management Review* pp. 1-22. Retrieved from <http://mgv.mim.edu.my/mmp> on 24 June, (2011)
- Gilbert, J. & fister, B (2011). Reading, risk and reality: college students reading for pleasure. *College and Research Libraries*. Vol. 72 No.5 Sept. pp. 474-495
- Gupta, D. (2010). Importance of cultivating reading as a habit in children. Retrieved from <http://indianblogger.com/importance-of-cultivating-reading-habit-as-a-habit-in-children/> pp.1-2 on 24 June, 2011
- Iheanacho, (2011). Improving the reading culture of the Nigerian youth: challenges for the National Library of Nigeria. *Journal of Senior Staff Association of National Library of Nigeria JOSSAN*) Vol. 1 No.1 Feb. pp. 29-43
- Kumar, D., Ansari, M. M. A. & Shukla, S. K. (2010). Reading habits of senior secondary students of Allahabad City, U. P. India *Library Philosophy and Practice* pp.1-8. Retrieved at <http://www.webpages.unidaho.edu/~mbolin/kumar-ansari-skukla.htm> on Jan. 6 2012
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003). Pearson Education: Harlow Essex, England p. 725
- Oguz, E., Yildiz, A. & Hayirsever, F. (2009). Assessing reading habits of future classroom teachers in the context of their sociodemographic features. *International Journal of Human and Social Sciences* Vol. 4 No. 10 pp. 760-769. Retrieved from www.waset.org/journal/ijhss/v4/v4-10-100.pdf on June 27, 2012
- Ojerinde, D., (2012). 21st century university administration in Nigeria being paper presented at the 4th annual lecture on the relevance of Registry in University Administration held at the Federal University of Technology, Akure on 31st September, 2012 pp. 1-30
- Smithies, M. (2012). Reading habits in a third world technological university. Retrieved from www.waset.org/journal/ijhss/v4/v4-10-100.pdf on June 26, 2012

- Sternberg, B.I., Kaplan, K. A. & Borck, J. E. (2007) enhancing adolescent literacy achievement through integration of technology in the classroom. *Research Quarterly* Vol. 42 No. 3 July/Aug/ Sep. pp. 416-420
- Thanuskodi, S. (2011). Reading habits among Library and Information Science students of Annamalai University : a survey. *International Journal of Educational Science* Vol. 3 No. 2 pp. 79-83. Retrieved at www.republishers.com/02-Journals/IJES/IJES-03-0-000=11-79-web/IJES-03-2-000-11-ABST-PDF/IJES/-03-2-079-11-149-Thar on June 2, 2012
- Upadhyay, G. H. (2012). Call to inculcate reading habit among students. Retrieved from http://dailypioneer.com/state/-editions/bhopal/21015-call-to-inculcate-reading_on Feb 6, 2012
- Vanderpuije, A. O. (2013). Ghana News Agency: The Ghana Readers Club Tee Shirt. Retrieved from ghheadlines.com>Home>PeaceFM on July 7, 2013