

EVALUATING READING HABIT AMONG JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EKITI STATE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study evaluated reading habit among students in Ekiti State Secondary Schools. The study specifically examined the frequency and time of reading among Junior Secondary School students in Ekiti State, the extent students read, how teachers' attitudes affect their students reading habits, and ways reading habit can be improved. The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population for the study consisted all of the Junior Secondary School Students in public secondary schools in Ekiti \central senatorial district. The size of the sample was 200 students drawn from ten public secondary schools using multistage sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire tagged Reading Habit Questionnaire (RHQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. The responses obtained were collated and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that most of the students rarely read as majority of them spend less than 2 hours daily on reading. They settle down to read only when given assignments or when examination was near. Based on the findings, it is therefore recommended among others that parents should teach their children to start reading from an early age and should provide reading materials for them. Also, it was recommended that teachers should engage students in fervent reading and writing activities.

Keywords: Reading, Habit, Library, Descriptive, Revealed Students Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an essential tool in learning. It is a royal road to acquire knowledge, and the bedrock of education. It creates good access to information for individual advancement as well as corporate educational development. Information is indispensable, and, according to Yusuf (2007), it bridges the gap between knowledge and ignorance. Reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension (Palani, 2012). Reading is an essential way of learning and achieving any global academic breakthrough. Readers are leaders.

One of the major avenues for acquiring information is reading. Tella and Akande (2007) assert that the ability to read is at the heart of self-education and lifelong learning and that it is an art capable of transforming life and society. Reading is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built. The reading habit is irreplaceable weapon for

everyone in order to mentally grow and fulfil his or her potentials. Reading habit becomes an inbuilt tutor that everyone carries everywhere throughout his life.

Reading provides the key to all kinds of information. It enables one to learn how to build or fix things, to enjoy stories, to discover what other people believe and to develop ideas and beliefs of one's own. Perhaps the greatest benefit of literacy is that through reading we learn, experience everything personally and we can derive nearly as much from those experiences as from our own. It is a sign of literacy. An individual who cannot read efficiently has failed to acquire the skills that will enable him or her to become a literate person in the society. It is a skill that one cannot do without in this modern world of technology. To Potter (2011) reading fires children's imagination and encourages quick learning as well as widens their views, expands their horizons and helps readers learn about present times. He further stresses that reading encourages

imaginations, curiosity and the ability to handle complex ideas.

A child that forms the habit of reading is always different from his peer group at school because he becomes more knowledgeable than them and understands better than his colleagues what they are being taught in the class. A student's ability to further his education after Secondary School depends on the extent of interest he has developed in reading over the years. Yusuf (2015) observes that reading is critical for children's success in and outside school. In the views of Ogbonna (2014), reading literally refers to the ability to recognize and understand characters or speak words that may be printed or written on paper and other formats of recording human knowledge. It is the ability to obtain meaning from printed words.

Section 4 (paragraph 18) of the National Policy on Education (2014) states that secondary school students should be inspired with a desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and later in life. This is aimed at equipping the student to live effectively in this modern age of rapid technological development. This may account for why students in Junior Secondary Schools are expected to cultivate good reading habit.

Reading habit is a pattern in which individual organizes his reading culture in a worthwhile literacy. Good reading habit in students is very necessary and highly essential, because one of the most important factors of education is the ability to read, understand and critically comprehend the text (Yusuf, 2015). However to be able to inculcate reading habit, students must develop the habit of reading on daily basis. Aliyu and Bilikisu (2012) are of the view that reading habits should be developed from early childhood and sustain through the whole life. Reading habits are well-planned activities and deliberate pattern of study which have attained a form of consistency on the part of students toward understanding academic subjects and passing at examinations.

The importance of reading cannot be overemphasized, because no learning activity or situation can take place without reading. But one of the major problems facing the educational system in Nigeria seems to be the abysmal failure of students in public examinations at the secondary school level of education. This abysmal failure can be conceived to be linked with the absence of good reading habit among students. Although there are many reasons why people read, but observations and researches have shown that there is a low reading habit among students in the recent times, especially in developing countries, because reading is not considered as a relevant leisure activity as it does not form part of children's social interaction. Another major problem that contributes to poor reading habits among students is activity provided by social media platforms such as sports and games, entertainment, chats and the likes . It appears that students now have viewing culture instead of reading culture because of the advents of social media and acute manipulation of ICTs gadgets. Also the lack of available information resources like text books both in the school library and at homes also could lead to lack of students forming the habits of reading.

The aim of this study is therefore to investigate reading habit among junior secondary school students in Ekiti State in the area of:

- The frequency and span of reading among students in Ekiti State
- The extent Junior Secondary School students read;
- How teachers' attitudes to the students affect their reading habit; and
- Ways reading habit can be improved.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised for investigation

- What is the frequency and span of reading among Junior Secondary School students in Ekiti State?
- To what extent do Junior Secondary School students read?

- How do the teachers’ attitudes to the students affect their reading habit?
- In what ways can reading habit be improved?

METHOD

A descriptive survey design was adopted which enabled the researchers to collect and analyze data from a sample of the entire population without any manipulations.

The population for the study was all Junior Secondary school students in public secondary schools in Ekiti Central Senatorial District of Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 200 students selected from 10 public secondary schools in Ekiti Central Senatorial District of Ekiti State. The sample was selected via multi stage sampling procedure.

Instrumentation

A well-constructed and self-developed questionnaire titled “Reading Habit Questionnaire (RHQ)” was used to get the desired information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two

sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of the respondents which included frequency and time of reading, Section B consisted of 17 items that elicited responses from the respondents on the extent students read, how teachers’ attitudes affect their reading habit and ways their reading habit can be improved, with response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The face and content validity was ascertained by giving the designed questionnaire to experts of Tests and Measurement, and Language Education for vetting before distributing it to the respondents. Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the frequency and span of reading among Junior Secondary School students in Ekiti State?

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Frequency Of Reading Among Students

S/N	Frequency	No of Students	Percentage (%)
1.	Always	49+7	24.5
2.	Often	62+7	31.0
3.	Rarely	67+8=	33.5
4.	Never	22=0	11.0
	Total	200	100

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Span of Reading among Students

S/N	Time spent on reading daily	No of Students	Percentage (%)
1.	Less than 1 hour	109	54.5
2.	1 – 2 hours	64	32.0
3.	2 – 3 hours	26	13.0
4.	3 – 4 hours	1	0.5
5.	Above 4 hours	-	0.0
	Total	200	100

Table 1 reveals that 49 (24.5%) students claimed that they always read, 62 (31%) agreed that they often read their books while 67 (33.5%) agreed that they rarely read their books and 22 (11%) agreed that they never read their books.

Table 2 shows that majority of the students 109 (54.5%) of the respondents claimed that they spend less than 1 hour on daily reading, 64 (32%) students claimed that they spend between 1 to 2 hours daily reading, while 26 (13%) students stated that

they spend between 2 to 3 hours reading their books. Only 1 (0.5%) student spend between 3 to 4 hours on daily reading while none of the respondents spend above 4 hours on daily reading.

Based on the respondents' view, it can be concluded that most of the students rarely read and only read whenever they feel

like reading. Also, majority of the students spend less than 2 hours daily on reading.

Research Question 2

To what extent do Junior Secondary School students read?

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Showing the Extent Students Read

S/N	Items	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1.	I lack interest in reading generally	147 (73.5%)	53 (26.5%)	2.97	0.61	Accepted
2.	I settle down to read only when I am given assignments or exams	158 (79.0%)	42 (21.0%)	3.12	0.52	Accepted
3.	I do not read other books such as novels, newspapers and magazines	189 (94.5%)	11 (5.5%)	3.44	0.41	Accepted
4.	I enjoy reading other texts outside my classrooms work	17 (8.5%)	183 (91.5%)	1.69	0.83	Accepted
5.	I prefer to play rather than read during my leisure/free time.	149 (74.5%)	51 (25.5%)	3.06	0.57	Accepted

Mean Cut-off: 2.50

Table 3 shows the extent Junior Secondary School Students read. 147 students representing 73.5% agreed that they lack interest in reading generally. 158 respondents representing 79.0% agreed that settle down to read only when they are given assignments or examination while 189 representing 94.5% of the respondents agreed that they do not read other books such as novels, newspapers and magazines and only 17 respondents representing 8.5% agreed that they enjoy reading other texts outside the classrooms work. One hundred and forty nine (149) respondents representing 74.5% agreed that they prefer to play rather than read during their leisure/free time.

From the above table, it is discovered that students lack interest in reading generally. They settle down to read only when given assignments or examination and they do not read other books such as novels, newspapers and magazines as reveals by the mean scores. Also, many students prefer to play rather than read during their leisure/free period.

Research Question 3

How do the teachers' attitudes to the students affect their reading habit?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics Showing Teachers' Attitude

S/N	Items	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1.	My teacher creates opportunities for students to read books in our class	92 (46.0%)	108 (54.0%)	2.47	0.64	Rejected
2.	I dislike the reading method used by my teacher	89 (44.5%)	111 (55.5%)	2.41	0.66	Rejected

3.	My teacher encourages me to read novels, short stories and other materials	86 (43.0%)	114 (57.0%)	2.39	0.68	Rejected
4.	My teacher serves as a model to me as he/she reads	79 (39.5%)	121 (60.5%)	2.32	0.69	Rejected
5.	My teacher's method of teaching reading is interesting	101 (50.5%)	99 (49.5%)	2.52	0.61	Accepted

Mean Cut-off: 2.50

Table 4 shows how teachers' attitudes to the students affect their reading habit. The table reveals that only 92 representing 46% of the respondents agreed that teacher creates opportunities for students to read books in the class while 89(44.5%) of the respondents agreed that they dislike the reading method used by their teacher and 86 representing 43% of the respondents agreed that their teacher encourages them to read novels, short stories and other materials. Less than half of the respondents, 79 (39.5%) agreed that their

teacher serves as a model to them as he/she reads while 101 (50.5%) of the respondents agreed that their teacher's method of teaching reading is interesting.

It can be concluded from the table that the teachers do not create opportunities and encourage the students to read books, novels, short stories nor serve as model to the students when they read.

Research Question 4

In what ways can reading habit be improved?

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics Showing Ways Reading Habit can be Improved

S/N	Items	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1.	Each school should have a functional library manned by a professional teacher librarian	184 (92.0%)	16 (8.0%)	3.34	0.54	Accepted
2.	Parent should teach their children to start reading from an early age	173 (86.5%)	27 (13.5%)	3.25	0.55	Accepted
3.	Time for reading in the library should be included in the school timetable	84 (42.0%)	116 (58.0%)	2.35	0.69	Rejected
4.	Students should be encouraged to read aloud publicly to the hearing of others during teaching sessions	129 (64.5%)	71 (35.5%)	2.80	0.61	Accepted
5.	Teachers should engage students in vigorous reading and writing activities.	191 (95.5%)	9 (4.5%)	3.51	0.42	Accepted
6.	Prizes should be awarded to students who are proficient in reading and writing	197 (98.5%)	3 (1.5%)	3.71	0.38	Accepted
7.	Parents should provide reading materials for their children	198 (99.0%)	2 (1.0%)	3.78	0.36	Accepted

Mean Cut-off: 2.50

From table 4, it is observed that 184 representing 92% of the respondents agreed with the view that each school should have a functional library manned by a professional teacher librarian while 173 representing

86.5% of the respondents agreed that parents should also teach their children to start reading from an early age and 129 representing 64.5% of the respondents agreed students should be encouraged to read aloud

publicly to the hearing of others during teaching sessions.

One hundred and Ninety one (191) representing 96.5% of the respondents further revealed that teachers should engage students in vigorous reading and writing activities while 197 representing 98.5% of the respondents agreed that prizes should be awarded to students who are proficient in reading and writing as a way of improving reading habit and 198 representing 99% of the respondents agreed that parents should provide reading materials for their children. However, 116 representing 58% of the respondents disagreed that time for reading in the library should be included in the school timetable.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that most of the students rarely read and only read whenever they feel like reading. Also, majority of the students spend less than 2 hours daily on reading. On the extent of reading among students, the study revealed that students lack interest in reading generally. They settle down to read only when given assignments or during examination period as most of them do not read other books such as novels, newspapers and magazines neither do they enjoy reading other texts outside their classroom. They prefer to play rather than read during their leisure time. A finding of Yusuf (2015) corroborates the above as he concludes that students have lost interest in reading and most of them only read to pass.

The study further revealed that the teachers do not create opportunities nor encourage students to read books, like novels, short stories nor serve as models to the students when they read. This agrees with the findings of Yusuf (2015) who reports that most teachers have negative attitude towards the teaching of reading in schools. He further states that most teachers are not willing to diversify their methods to make their reading lessons interesting. This strongly proves that teachers' attitudes affect the reading habits of the students.

In conclusion, the respondents agreed that each school should have a functional library manned by a professional teacher librarian as a way of improving reading habit of students. As Yusuf (2007) rightly says "library programmes for children are founded on the knowledge that early literacy exercises have a positive effect on language growth, reading development and scholarly achievement". The parents, according to the finding of the research, should teach their children to start reading from an early age. They should provide reading materials for their children. Vivien (2004) affirms this when she says that one of the most important gifts a parent or care-giver can give to a child is to enable and encourage him to love reading. Students should be encouraged to read aloud and publicly too to the hearing of others and that teachers should engage students in frequent reading and writing activities. Finally, it is discovered that award of prizes to students could serve as motivation to cultivate good attitude and the desired writing habits in the students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that most of the students rarely read and only read whenever they feel like reading as majority of them spend less than 2 hours daily on reading. Also, most of the students lack interest in reading generally. They settle down to read only when given assignments or exams as they prefer to play rather than read during their leisure/free period. Reading is not a natural gift. It is vigorously learnt before the habit of it can be developed. Therefore, opportunity for constant practice must be created and regularly reinforced in the class room activities. The environment must be prepared in such a way as to stimulate the interest of the students to read. This should start from the beginning through picture reading, sample reading, silent reading, group reading, class public reading and reading competition programmes. Teachers must be well trained in the methodology of teaching reading through practical and

exciting classroom activities by this, the students will derive joy and satisfaction in reading endeavour.

If reading exercise is carried out in its uttermost essence, it develops:

R--- royal road to knowledge

E--- eagle eyes for knowledge

A ---accessible avenue for knowledge

D--- deeper dominion of knowledge

I__ inquisitive investigation of knowledge

N---nurturing nature for growth of knowledge

G--- growing gift of knowledge

The summary and conclusion from the findings is that the teachers do not create opportunities for students to read novels, short stories nor serve as model to the students when they read. As a result of this, golden benefits that can be derived from reading endeavour elude the students.

Based on the findings it is therefore recommended that:

- Parents should teach their children to start reading from an early age and should provide reading materials for them.
- Each school should have a functional library manned by a professional teacher librarian.
- Students should be encouraged to read publicly to the hearing of others during teaching sessions.
- Teachers should engage students in fervent reading and writing activities.
- Prizes should be awarded to students who are proficient in reading and writing especially through well organised reading competitions.

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