

**INFLUENCE OF READING HABIT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN
GOVERNMENT GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL
SAMARU ZARIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess the reading habits on students' academic performance. The study was conducted at Zaria Metropolis Kaduna State Nigeria. Research questions. Questionnaires were used for data collection. The data were analyzed quantitatively with the use of common percentage. Figures and tables were used to present the results of findings. From the total of 138 copies of questionnaires distributed, 115 copies representing 92% were filled and returned. The findings showed that, majority of the respondents acknowledge the importance of reading, 81.9% of the respondents neither read books while 62% of the respondents only read for the purpose of passing examination. The study confirmed that reading habit has influence on academic performance' of the students, the study recommended among others that, students should be encouraged to use the library for research and also, reading period should be provided in the school time-table with respect to the formula of assessment.

Keywords: *Reading Habit, Academic Performance, Students, Secondary, Schools, Zaria, Metropolis.*

Introduction

Every nation in the world is today concerned with the level of the literacy of its citizens. Therefore, every government makes deliberate efforts at ensuring that its population is not only educated but well informed. To achieve this most nations come up with a range of projects to support the promotion of reading habit among children, adolescence, in particular, and the broader community in general. The developed countries have gone very far in this direction to the extent that their societies have undergone transformation, from literate societies to literary societies, and today information societies to knowledge societies. Similar efforts have also been undertaken by developing countries. Developing countries across Africa like Nigeria for example, have established different programmes and projects for promoting academic performance of learners. For example, Reader Development Programme (RDP), Adult Literacy

Programme (ALP), Partnership Programme (PP), Universal Primary Education Programme (UPE), Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEP), Call Back Book (CBB) etc.

Reading has a crucial role to play in creating independent learners, literacy promotion and educational attainment of individuals in every society in the world. Education at all levels is the key to national development. It is when the citizens are educated and enlightened that they can develop and could meaningfully contribute to the general development of their country. It is in this spirit that nations of the world try to give education a top priority in their developmental plans and programmes. Reading influences readers in the promotion of one's personal development in particular and social progress in general. The importance of reading is to allow the reader to understand the meaning of a written text, evaluate its significance, and use what he/she has read, to enhance his or her reading effectiveness, or pleasure (Ibrahim 2004). Similarly, Richard (2009) stated that the individual who reads well has the means for widening mental horizons and of multiplying opportunities of success.

It is a fact that the beginning of acquisition of education is learning how to read and write. Similarly, Reading is described by Holderness (2002) as an activity characterized by the translation of symbols, or letters, into words and sentences that communicate information and mean something to the reader. However, Anthony (2005) viewed reading as the interaction of what is in the head with what is on the page within a particular context that causes the reader to comprehend what he read. However, Tella and Akande (2007) has broadly defined reading as a process of thinking, recalling and relating concepts under the function of written words. Thus, reading can also be seen as the ability to recognize and examine words or sentences and understand the information within.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of reading towards personal, societal and national development cannot be overemphasized. For an excellent enlightments and awareness towards educational development, there is need for the students to form good reading habit. Presently, due to the influence of social networking, students do not show much interest in reading both printed and electronic means of information resources (Adamu 2009). A student who lives in a community with other people need to develop interest on reading in other to be aware and enlightened on what is taking place in the society; and this will help the learner to know what has happened, adjust the present and to plan for the future. The school library provides the ideal environment to carry out these academic activities.

Preliminary investigations carried out by researchers showed that most of the students failed written examination and test. The governments continue to lament over the poor academic performance of school children who pass through these examinations. (Kabiru 2010).

One wonders what factors could be responsible for this poor performance. The determination of these factors is a gap in knowledge. It is on this backdrop that this study is carried out to determine the Influence of Reading Habit on Students' Academic Performance in Government Secondary School, Samaru Zaria.

Research Questions

This study has the following research questions:

1. What are the types of reading habits practiced by students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru Zaria?
2. To what extent do Students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru Zaria read their books in order to pass their examinations?
3. How does reading habits influence the academic performance of Students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru Zaria?

Scope of the Study

The study covered the influence of reading habits on students' academic performance in Government Girls Secondary School Samaru Zaria. The types of reading habit such as recreational, concentration and hobby were also covered in the study.

Literature Review

Reading can be defined as individual's ability to recognize, understand, interpret and make appropriate use of letters, characters and symbols contained in an information carrier or source for personal development. Reading according to Michael and Agatha (2014) is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development. This according to the authors implies making meaning out of recorded information either printed or non-printed in the life of an individual. People read for different reasons and purposes, some of which include for pleasure, leisure, relaxation, information and for knowledge. Reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. Reading requires identification and comprehension. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context (Palani, 2012). The author further opines that reading is a process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving. Reading is an essential tool for knowledge transfer and the habit of reading is an academic activity that increases skills in reading strategies.

Reading is believed to be the major activities of students at all levels of education. Students read for different purposes depending on the situation or circumstances they find themselves such as knowledge seeking, examination, leisure/recreation and information searching. Everyday reading consists of individuals' reading activities for a variety of purposes, such as for relaxation or information (Issa. et al, 2012). They further opined that from middle childhood through adulthood, reading becomes a major component of studying, and much information learned through studying is initially acquired through reading. Therefore, incessant reading activities and skills have direct and positive impact on students' academic performance and vocabulary development.

The importance of reading to the academic achievement of students cannot be overstressed, thus Tella and Akande (2007) viewed that reading has a direct influence on the performance of any student, be it for the purpose of passing exams or for leisure. In the views of Plani (2012) on the benefit of reading says that a reader can learn new skills, become more knowledgeable about the whole world and can be stimulated to both thoughts and emotions. As human beings there different reasons why we read and different kinds of materials we read. To Haliru (2015) 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. Moreover, he stressed that reading encourages imaginations, curiosity and the ability to handle complex ideas. However reading is affected by certain factors such as level of comprehension reading interest and so on. Nssein (2008) highlighted some of the factors leading to low reading habit as; slow comprehensive rate, slow reading rate, difficulty in distinguishing main ideas from relevant details, inadequate vocabulary, inadequate reading interests, on availability of reading materials, distractions from Television, and other viewing gadgets. The negative effect of poor reading skill according to Issa et al (2012) can result to a child develop a poor attitude toward school and can create self-esteem problems later in life. However, poor reading habits is attributed to; mass failure, poverty, loss of self-esteem, and above all illiteracy. Micheal and Agatha (2014) mentioned that the cultivation of reading habit is influenced by a range of other factor like exposure to media and computer, also the fact that we are currently living in area where public discussion take place on television, video, multi – channel satellite broadcasting, interactive cable system, email and internet stimulate reading activity. It could be possibly be argue that visual representation has to be read more actively as it convey a range of ways accompany the print or verbal text. Therefore, extensive reading has be found to be the most effective way of developing reading skill and habit among youth in the sense that each reader will have a choice of what to read and they have more scope following their own interest: this will definitely reduce the teachers control and encourages learning to occur outside the class (Haliru, R.A. et al, 2015).

Reading enhances general language competence. In many ways, students so far, do not fully understand the benefits of reading extend beyond what their thought. There is a spread of effect from reading competence to other language skills writing, speaking and control over syntax (Usman 2010). The same phenomenon is noted by Ibrahim (2011) but they even note evidence of improvements in the spoken language. So reading copiously seems to benefit all language skills, not just reading.

Reading extends, consolidate and sustain vocabulary growth. Vocabulary is not learned by a single exposure. Reading allows for multiple encounters with words and phrases in context thus making possible the progressive accretion of meanings to students. By presenting items in context, it also makes the deduction of meaning of unknown items easier. There have been many studies of vocabulary acquisition from reading habit (Ibrahim 2011). Reading helps improve writing. There is a well-established link between reading and writing. Basically, the more students read, the better they write. Commonsense would indicate that as we meet more language, more often, through reading, our language acquisition mechanism is primed to produce it in writing or speech when it is needed.

Methodology

The study adopted Survey research of descriptive nature. The populations of this study consisted of forty eight students namely: Ten (10) SS1A students, twelve (12) SS1B students, fifteen (15) SS2A students,

and eleven (11) SS2B. Questionnaire and observation were the data collection instruments. The target respondents consists of senior secondary students because they are believed to be in the best position to give best responses to the items on the research questions due to their level of understanding when compared to their counterpart in the junior secondary classes.

Descriptive statistical tools such as simple percentages, tables and charts were used to analyze the data. Out of the 60 (100%) respondents, 56 (93%) of the respondents were duly filled and returned. The

Findings and Discussion

RQ 1: Types of reading practices

Table 1: Types of Reading practice by Government Secondary School Students of Samaru Zaria

Types of Reading	RESPONDENTS' CLASSES									
	SS1A		SS1B		SS2A		SS2B		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Recreational	2	3.6	3	5.4	3	5.4	3	5.4	11	19.7
Concentration	8	14.2	5	9	6	10.7	6	10.7	25	44.5
Hobby	1	1.8	1	1.8	2	3.6	1	1.8	6	10.8

As shown in Table 1 above, Concentration type of reading as recorded with 25 (44.5%) was the commonest type of reading performs by Government Girls Secondary Schools of Samaru Zaria. It was also observed from table 4.1 that Hobby type of reading recoded to have the lowest responses of the respondents with 6 (10.8%). This type of reading most at times is the act of reading of information resources done by an individual regardless of his professionalism. Samuel (2011) defines reading habit as a learned practice of seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through the written word. She says that the practice could be acquired by reading books, journals, magazines and newspapers etc. According to her, having a reading habit is imperative for citizens if the future of the country is to be guaranteed. This finding is in line with that of Samuel (2011) which stated that, for young people to be acquainted with different skills, they need to develop a well reading habit. It was therefore found out that students adopted the concentration type of reading habit more than other types. This is because the concentration type of reading habit helps students to pass their examinations.

RQ2. Frequency of Reading Habit by Government Girls Secondary School Samaru Zaria

Table 2. Frequency of Reading Habit by Government Girls Secondary School Samaru Zaria

Types of Reading	Frequency of Reading Information Resources								Total	
	Always		Very often		Occasionally		Rarely			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Concentration	15	26.8	15	26.8	14	25	12	21.4	56	100.0
Recreational	14	25	12	21.4	15	26.8	15	26.8	56	100.0
Hobby	12	21.4	15	26.8	14	25	15	26.8	56	100.0

From the table 2 above, it was discovered that concentration type of reading habit has the highest score with the score of 15 (26.8%). Followed by Recreational and Hobby types with the score of 14 (25%) and 12 (21.4%) respectively. The respondents read recreationally when they feel like (occasionally) and concentrationally (always) because they want pass examinations and test. The findings from this table is that the always adopt concentration type of reading. This finding is in line with that of Usman (2010) which stated that, for young people to understand what the writer is passing in to them, they need to read over and over (i.e. concentration).

RQ. 3 Influence of reading Habit on the Academic Performance of Government Girls Secondary School Students Samaru Zaria

Table 3: Influence of Reading Habit on Government Girls Secondary School Students Samaru Zaria

Influence of Reading on Students' Academic Performance	Responses						Total	
	Strongly Agree		Undecided		Strongly Disagreed			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
It develop my vocabulary	55	98.2	1	1.8	0	0	56	100.0
It help to develop my writing skills	54	96.4	1	1.8	1	1.8	56	100.0
It enhance my reading habit	54	96.4	0	0	2	3.6	56	100.0
It help me to understand my culture better	55	98.2	0	0	1	1.8	56	100.0
It help me to understand the culture of others	52	92.9	2	3.6	1	1.8	56	100.0
To develop interest to read other literature	54	96.4	1	1.8	1	1.8	56	100.0
It help me to evaluate information	53	94.7	1	1.8	2	3.6	56	100.0
It also help me to analyze information	54	96.4	1	1.8	1	1.8	56	100.0
It develop my sense of reasoning	55	98.2	1	1.8	0	0	56	100.0
It develop my communication skill	55	98.2	1	1.8	0	0	56	100.0
develops my mind	53	94.4	2	3.6	1	1.8	56	100.0
It improve my reading speed	54	96.4	1	1.8	0	0	56	100.0
Improves vocabulary and word power	54	96.4	1	1.8	1	1.8	56	100.0

Table 3 revealed that 55 (98.2%) had strongly agreed that reading has effects on their academic performance. The academic areas affected by students while reading are: development of vocabulary, writing skills, reading habit, understanding their culture and other cultures, others includes interest of reading other literature, sense of reasoning, communication skills and reading speed respectively. By this finding, it can be seen that reading has significant Influence on the Reading Habit on Academic Performance of Government Girls Secondary School students Samaru Zaria.

The table also revealed that about 2 (3.6%) was undecided on the Influence of Academic Performance of Government Girls Secondary School Students Samaru Zaria. This might be as a result of the fact that they had no enough time to read the questionnaires very well.

In all, it is concluded that reading has great Influence on the Academic Performance of students of Government Girls Secondary Schools Samaru Zaria. This finding is in line with that of Palani (2012) who pointed out that reading habit, is an essential and important aspect for creating a literate society in this world, and Yusuf (2013) where he pointed out that students who reads information resources improves academic performance continuously for life, and will develop his vocabulary, spellings, writing skills etc.

Summary of Findings

Based on the data collected and analyzed for this study, the following are the summary of major findings:

1. That the Concentration and recreational types of reading were the types of reading practiced by the students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru, Zaria.
2. That Students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru Zaria do not read frequently.
3. That the students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru, Zaria are positively influenced in their academic performance while reading. The areas of influence are: Development of vocabulary, It help to develop the respondents' writing skills, It enhance their reading habit, it help them in ability to evaluate and analyze information, It help them to understand their culture better, It also help them to understand the culture of others, To develop their interest to read other literature, It improve their reading speed etc.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the study revealed that students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru, Zaria adopted concentration type of reading habit which has the highest scores. This is because most of the students of Government Girls Secondary School Samaru, Zaria read their books in order to pass examination and tests, this is followed by recreational and hubby types of readings which students read for leisure and relaxation respectively. The study further revealed that reading has significant Influence on the Reading Habit on Academic Performance of Government Girls Secondary School students Samaru, Zaria.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, it recommended that:

1. That the respondents should improve their reading habits by adopting the concentration type, read always and very often so as to influence their academic performance in areas like: pronunciation, grammar, spelling, reading etc.
2. That the respondents should be encouraged and enlightened on the importance of reading through seminars, workshops.

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