



EXPLORATION OF READING HABITS AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the reading habits of undergraduates in South West Nigeria. It adopted a descriptive survey research design where Eight hundred and thirty-four undergraduates who were accidentally sampled were used from seven (7) universities in South West Nigeria through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used was Reading Habits Inventory (RHI) which contained twenty-five (25) items. ANOVA and T-Test were the statistical tools used for the analysis of data. Result showed that the means of the option was 2.5, while the mean average of the responses to reading habits among undergraduates in South West Nigeria was 2.94 which was above the mean of 2.5. This implied that undergraduates in South West Nigeria have good reading habits. The result of the hypothesis showed that there was no significant difference in the reading habits of undergraduates on the basis of gender ($t=1.535$, $df=816$, $p=.125$). This established the fact that there was no significant difference in the reading habits of male and female undergraduates in South West Nigeria. To cap it all, it was concluded that Undergraduates have good reading habits and there was no significant difference in the reading habits of males and females. Then, it was recommended that the parents and teachers should take it as a responsibility to nurture and cultivate reading habits in their children early enough, so that the habits of reading is formed in them and is sustained throughout their undergraduate days. On the individual undergraduate level, they should sustain their good reading habits, then cultivate the habits of reading Newspapers on a daily basis in the library. They should also cultivate the habits of reading at least, a story book per day, as well as, engaging in reading, consulting references on their course outlines, and reading through e-resources. The university authorities should develop alternative plans with the view of increasing reading habits among undergraduates. The same measure of teaching reading habits should be applied to all undergraduates regardless of sex.

Keywords: reading, reading habits, reading for pleasure, reading hobby, undergraduates, e-resources.

Introduction

Reading is the prime instrument, as well as, a systematic cognitive process of acquiring knowledge and other related skills from printed texts for application to future problems. This is a macro definition of reading where reading activity takes place at an advanced stage. Under graduates engage in this type of reading where psycholinguistic factors like reading culture and reading habits greatly influence readers reading achievements and performance. However, some undergraduates are at the backwaters of reading because they are incapable to read to learn, and learn to read (Apari, 2005). This is because a lot of them are lazy and neither have reading habits nor positive reading habits that can promote their academic performances and achievements (advancements). Reading habits is a reading activity that developed into continuous reading habits formation. They are reading tendencies that enable students to plan their private reading after learning in classroom situation. Readers with reading habits read anything they come across as there is the urge in them to read every time. With their good reading habits, they attain mastery in their areas of specialization. One of the major factors that affects reading habits is the reader's environment. So, if the environment is not conducive, and is not rich with books, it may be difficult for learners to read continuously until reading habits formation comes to play. Hussain (2006) noted that students in public secondary schools often come from economically poor and average income families, who later face various problems causing emotional disturbances among the learners. This problem has eventually affected their academic performances in schools, which has caused a serious damage to their achievement status in tertiary institutions. Nevertheless, students who come from very high socio-economic homes have the advantage to read books in their parents' libraries. Their parents also have the financial wherewithal to provide storybooks for their children for pleasure and relaxation, so, such children develop interest in literature, and basically, basal books in their early life and when they eventually find themselves in school, they make judicious use of the library and become good at reading. However, those who read from the time they were young excel in

reading and are knowledgeable (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001). See also, Balan, Kantenga & Simon (2019), while those who come from low-income families or cultures where reading is deemphasized displayed very poor reading skills (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Even though, when they develop reading habits as they get older, and get into other habits, their attitudes change and they stop reading (Owusu- Acheaw and Larson, 2014). Okwiilagwe (1998) sees good reading habit as positive reading, while Ogunbiyi and Imam (2000) noted that good reading habits is the ability of the reader to construct and willingly pick a reading material and read for a specific purpose without guidance and influence of anybody. As a matter of fact, reading habits is the ability to avoid all the bad habits associated with reading, so, the beauty of reading habits is for it to be good because the goodness in it facilitates reading comprehension. Owusu- Acheaw and Larson also noted that good reading habits is formed when the reader reads regularly without thinking about it because of its continuity. In Asian countries, the reading habits situation is worse. Balam, Katenga and Simon (2019) noted that Thailand has one of the worst reading records because Thai people do not view reading as a required activity. Similarly, a study in Thangerang city in Indonesia showed that few people were in the habits of reading. This reading habit situation is worrisome, and it urgently calls for urgent solution.

There are three main types of reading habits which are reading for hobby, recreation, and relaxation (Ogbodo, 2010) in Owusu-Acheaw and Larson, (2014). A hobby is an activity one does because he derives joy, and some satisfaction from it Khoirunnisa (2018) carried out a study on reading habits and its effects on academic writing and found three types of reasons for reading: the necessity of a particular information, hobby and the pleasure of entertainment. The greater quantity of participants (70%), choose necessity as the reason while (33%) choose hobby and pleasure as their reasons for reading. This implies that they read to get information to increase their knowledge and also for hobby and pleasure. However, it is the responsibility of parents to stimulate their children into reading towards developing their

hobbies towards reading. The parents at this level, buy colorful picture books, and later graduate into buying story books for the children to read. This action will eventually encourage the children to develop taste for reading which snowballs into reading habits. The purpose of reading habits is to widen the readers horizon areas in education, religion, political, economic and current affairs, fiction and non-fiction. Readers knowledge in those areas expand their frontiers of knowledge in different disciplines and make them versatile in knowledge, and its application to solving personal, groups and societal problems.

Reading for recreation and relaxation, specifically, recreation is a reading activity for pleasure and amusement. There are some story books that are both interesting and educative, and once students have developed reading habits, they will always develop desire to read for pleasure to dabs minds and relax from the pressure of work and fatigue This means that, it is a desire for a change from daily pressure of work by reading books, newspaper and other written materials which are different and of interest to them. Students, who read magazines and story books at interval, learn to relax, cool their brains, avoid mental fatigue and also make them to have a disciplined life in school. Chettri and Rout (2013) noted that pleasure reading furthers the development of reading as a life -long habits which strengthen both language skills and fluency. However, Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) professed that reading for pleasure has an influence on the development and understanding of concepts, verbal fluency, comprehension, eloquence, vivid thinking, and academic achievement. Nevertheless, lack of reading habits results in poor reading comprehension, verbal fluency, poor grades, and lack of vivid thinking. Acheaw and Larson also cited Deavers (2000) that reading is an intellectual action which is possible in that, a man performs a habit of reading and practices from the childhood, meaning that, reading hobby is a continues reading.

However, students with good reading habits always engage in effective reading which always reflect positively in their examination scores. Issa et al. (2021), Acheaw and Larson (2014), noted that the poor or bad reading habit could partly be

held responsible for general poor performance that the school system usually records in both internal and external examination. Reading habit determines the academic achievements of students to a greater extent. Both reading and academic achievements are interrelated and dependent on each other. Students often come from different environments and branches with different levels of academic achievements. Therefore, they differ in the patterns of reading habits. Academic achievement as it were, means how much knowledge the individual has acquired from the school (Bashir and Mattoo, 2012).

In support of the foregoing, Bhan and Gupta (2010) examined study habits and academic achievement among the students belonging to castle group. The results revealed that sex has no significant impacts on the study habits and academic achievement of students. Similarly, Ceballo, McLoyd and Toyokawa (2004) established in their study that student's gender strongly affects their academic performance with girls performing better in the subjects of mathematics and English as well as aggregate performance. By this result, it is evident that girls always show more efforts in their studies leading to better grades at school. In the same vein, Metheniel and Yenagi (2009), examined the source of poor academic performance among undergraduates and identified the following factors: intellectual ability, poor study habit, motivations, lack of vocational goals, low self-concept, low socio-economic status of the family and poor family structure among others.

However, Onuaha and Subair (2013) carried out a study on study habits of undergraduate students in selected federal universities in South West Nigeria. The objectives of this study were to determine students study habits in relation to time management, ascertain the methods of knowledge assimilations utilized by students and identify the preferred study environments of students. The descriptive survey design was used and the population was made up of two thousand and eight six (2086) third year students from eight (8) departments in three selected federal university in Nigeria. These are University of Ibadan (UI), University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (OAU). The findings of this study revealed that respondents do spend

their free time studying and usually organizing their studies. A little below average (48.9%) prepare timetable for studying and majority did not have fixed periods for studying. The implication of this is that studying is left to chance even though a good number of respondents claimed to organize their studies. The reality however is flawed by not having stable study periods. Onuoha and Subair (2013) cited Ozsoy, Memis and Temu (2009), that time management is crucial to studying because it helps learners decide the amount of time required for studying while also acting as a control measure on time allocated to different activities.

The findings also affirmed that note taking during lectures and memorization were the most used methods for knowledge assimilation whilst the least used were administration of self-test and setting the memorization and self-test were the least used methods for knowledge assimilation. The findings do, however disagree with Effiong, Azikwe and Anthony (2012) whose study revealed that respondents used mainly summarization. The disparity could be attributed to the fact that respondents in this study were made up of undergraduate students while the study of Effiong, Azikwe and Anthony (2012) utilized postgraduate students who are presumably more immature.

Statement of Problem

Reading is the prime instrument, as well as, systematic cognitive process of acquiring knowledge and other related skills from printed text for application to future problems. Rather than engaging ineffective reading for pleasure, recreation and relaxation, youths are busy text-messaging, watching video clips, posting nude pictures and watching You Tubes. These activities affect their reading for pleasure, recreation and relaxation. The effect is that students no longer develop their reading and writing habits. In most of their writings, incomplete words characterized by wrong spellings featured prominently in their exam scripts and assignments. Their oral reading is more often fraught with phonological errors with much substitution of vocalic sounds and consonantals for their mother tongue equivalents. This in turn affects their intelligibility of reading texts, and their ability to apply their

comprehension to solving problems. More so, this also, pushes some students to the backwaters of reading because they are incapable to read to learn and learn to read (Apari, 2005) for a lot of them are lazy and have no interest in academic literatures. Some of them have learned to read in their homes, but as they get older and get into other hobbies, their attitudes change and they stop reading (Owusu- Acheaw and Larson, 2014) In Asian countries, the reading habits situation is worse. Balam, katenga and Simon (2019) noted that Thailand has one of the worst reading records because Thail people do not view reading as a required activity. Similarly, a Study in Tangerang city in Indonesia showed that few people were in the habit of reading. This reading habit situation is worrisome, and it urgently calls for urgent solution, hence, an investigation into reading habits of undergraduates in south west Nigeria

Objective of the study

The objectives of this study are to determine:

1. The reading habits of undergraduates in south west Nigeria
2. The gender differences of undergraduates in south west Nigeria.

Research Question

1. What are the reading habits of undergraduates in south west Nigeria?

Hypothesis (1)

1. There is no significant difference in the reading habits of male and female undergraduates in south west Nigeria.

Research Method Design

Descriptive research design was employed for the purpose of gathering data on reading habits, as well as, the gender difference in the reading habits of undergraduates in south west Nigeria.

Population

The population of the study was all undergraduates in south west Nigeria: federal, state and private universities in south west Nigeria. The population was restricted to faculty of education, Arts, and social sciences Education.

Sampling and sampling Techniques

The study centered on six states: Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Osun, Ekiti and Lagos states: These states constitute Yoruba nation which is predominantly Yoruba speaking western Region of Nigeria. Yoruba is the language of immediate environment (LIM) and medium of instruction in lower primary elementary schools (NPE, 2004) From the states, seven universities, using simple random techniques were selected on the basis of school ownership. Federal (1University) State (5 Universities) and private (1University) The faculties were selected by Stratified random technique, and the undergraduate participants from the three faculties were selected using incidental sampling technique in that, students available during the administration of the instruments were given copies of questionnaires which led to federal 175, States 522 and privates 137 totaling 834 subjects.

Instrumentation

This study employed only reading habit inventory (RHI) which was adapted from Okwilagwe (1998), It contained 25 items meant to access the reading habits of undergraduates at federal, States, and private universities in the western part of Nigeria. The reading pattern is on the scale of Always, Sometimes, Rarely and Never. It accesses reading habits in the relevant areas which include

- A. General reading and practices
- B. Specified reading and practices
- C. Good reading habits and practices
- D. Bad reading habits and practices
- E. Effective use of reading techniques
- F. The visual factors influencing students effective reading.
- G. The motivational factors influencing students reading effectiveness.

Rq1: What are the ratings of undergraduates in common reading habits?

Table 1: Reading Habits among Undergraduates in South West Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	R	S	A	Mean	Mean Rank	Std.D
1	I am aware that with practice a person can improve his reading skills, and i can make a conscious effort generally toward that end	33 (4.0)	64 (7.7)	194 (23.3)	520 (62.4)	3.39	1	0.98
2	I am alert to the role which punctuation plays in aiding me to get the meaning.	43 (5.2)	130 (15.6)	216 (25.9)	443 (53.1)	3.27	2	0.92
3	I enjoy reading	38 (4.6)	62 (7.4)	343 (41.1)	380 (45.6)	3.25	3	0.877
4	When I read, especially for any length of time, I make sure that the page before me is adequate illuminated	54 (6.5)	156 (18.7)	369 (44.2)	226 (27.1)	3.25	4	1.051
5	When I pick up page of print, I notice the paragraphs specifically.	51 (6.1)	154 (18.5)	297 (35.6)	331 (39.7)	3.23	5	0.85
6	I feel comfortable and perfectly at ease while reading	47 (5.6)	70 (8.4)	283 (33.9)	400 (48.0)	3.16	6	1.064
7	While reading, I find it easy to keep my mind on the material before me.	45 (5.4)	123 (14.7)	337 (40.4)	322 (38.6)	3.11	7	0.903
8	I am mildly conscious of grammatical structure whole reading	42 (5.0)	105 (12.6)	303 (36.3)	355 (42.6)	3.10	8	1.029
9	While reading, I am aware of questions which arise in my own thinking about the materials being read.	41 (4.9)	104 (12.5)	332 (39.8)	334 (40.0)	3.10	9	0.981

10	I read at vary rates of speed, depending upon varying reading conditions	37 (4.4)	136 (16.3)	360 (43.2)	297 (35.6)	3.09	10	0.856
11	When I pick up page of print, I notice the paragraphs specifically	51 (6.1)	154 (18.5)	297 (35.6)	331 (39.7)	3.09	11	0.911
12	After I read a paragraph, if required to do so, i could sum up the main idea clearly and briefl y in my own words	53 (6.4)	98 (11.8)	343 (41.1)	315 (37.8)	3.05	12	1.059
13	After I read a paragraph, if required to do so, i could sum up the main idea clearly and briefly in my own words	53 (6.4)	98 (11.8)	343 (41.1)	315 (37.8)	3.04	13	1.009
14	After I have been reading foe a whole, I stop reading for few moments and rest my eyes by looking at some distance objects.	96 (11.5)	132 (15.8)	312 (37.4)	293 (35.1)	2.96	14	0.99
15	In reading more difficult material after reading a paragraph or a section, I pause to summarizing in a momentary flashback the material I have just covered	48 (5.8)	152 (18.2)	339 (40.6)	267 (32.0)	2.92	15	1.015
16	When I read, especially for any length of time, I make sure that the page before me is adequate illuminated	54 (6.5)	156 (18.7)	369 (44.2)	226 (27.1)	2.85	16	1.004
17	I do not lose my place or skip words or lines while reading.	84 (10.1)	162 (19.4)	280 (33.6)	282 (33.8)	2.85	17	1.093
18	I notice a distinctive style, or flavor, of the author	64 (7.7)	180 (21.6)	357 (42.8)	214 (25..7)	2.82	18	0.976
19	In reading larger units of writing (articles, chapters, etc), I try to see the you	73 (8.8)	160 (19.2)	344 (41.2)	230 (27.6)	2.81	19	1.037
20	I read group of words at one glance	88 (10.6)	172 (20.6)	348 (41.7)	200 (24.0)	7.73	20	1.038
21	I make a practice of skimming articles frequently.	73 (8.8)	171 (20.5)	382 (45.8)	151 (18.1)	2.60	21	1.085
22	I can read for long periods of time without a feeling of eye fatigue or tiredness	94 (11.3)	147 (17.6)	342 (41.0)	182 (21.8)	2.57	22	1.185
23	I read the preface of a book	132 (15.8)	170 (20.4)	300 (36.0)	185 (22.2)	2.53	23	1.161
24	While reading, I hold the page 15 to 20 inches from my eyes	142 (17.0)	205 (24.6)	325 (39.0)	129 (15.5)	2.45	24	1.066
25	I have little difficulty in remembering what I read	191 (22.9)	191 (22.9)	348 (41.7)	75 (9.0)	2.30	25	1.028

The mean of the options is 2.5, while the mean average of the responses to reading habits among undergraduates in south west Nigeria is 2.94, which is above the mean of 2.5. This implies that the undergraduate students in south west Nigeria have good reading habit. However, table 4.1a showed that undergraduates with the highest mean rank of 3.39 are aware that they can improve their reading through practical reading; followed

by the perception that they are alert to the function of punctuations (3.27); keeping the purpose of reading in mind while reading (3.25); while they used to look for specific items that can aid the reading of a new material (3.23). Furthermore, table 4.1ashows that the undergraduate students in south west Nigeria *sometimes* do the following: being comfortable and perfectly at ease while reading (3.16); keepingtheir mind on the material

before them (3.11);as well as being mildly conscious of grammatical structure (3.10); and aware of questions which arise in their mind while reading (3.10); noticing specifically, the paragraphs in a page picked (3.09); reading at varying speed rates depending on reading condition (3.09); trying to see the organization of the thought of a paragraph (3.05); and able to sum up the main idea clearly and briefly in their own words (3.04);

Moreover, the table also showed that undergraduates are aware that they used to stop and look at a distance so as to rest (2.96); do not lose their place or words while reading (2.85);

ensure that the page read is well illuminated (2.85); as well as noticing distinctive style or flavor of the author (2.82). they read group of words at a glance (2.73); frequently skimming articles (2.60); as reading for a long period with a feeling of eye fatigue (2.57); reading the preface of a book (2.53) and summarize in paragraphs when reading a large material (2.92). The table also shows that the undergraduate students in south west Nigeria rarely have difficulties in remembering what they read (2.30). It can be inferred on this that the undergraduates in South West Nigeria have a positive reading habit in their own assessment.

Ho1: There will be no significant difference in the students' reading habit on the (bold) basis of gender

Table 4.2b: Summary of T-test Showing Difference in Reading Habits between Male and Female undergraduates.

Variables/Gender	N	Mean	Std.D	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
READING HABIT							
Male	350	74.27	10.60	1.535	816	.125	Not Significant
Female	470	73.03	11.93				

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference in the reading habits of male and female undergraduates ($t = 1.54$; $df = 816$; $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that state that there is no significant difference in the reading habits of undergraduates based on gender is not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings begin with the research question one (RQ1) which states that, 'what are the reading habits of undergraduates in south west Nigeria? The result shows that the mean of the options is 2.5 while the mean average of the responses to reading habits of undergraduates in south west Nigeria was 2.94 which was above the mean of 2.5 This Implies that undergraduates in south west Nigeria have good reading habits. This agrees with Okwulagwe (1998) who noted that good reading habits is otherwise known as positive reading. Ogunbiyi and Iman (2000) affirmed that good reading habits refer to the ability of the reader to construct and willingly pick a reading material and read for a specific purpose without

guidance and influence. Collaborating with the forgoing, Acheaw and Larson (2014) professed that good reading habits is formed when the reader read regularly without thinking about it, because of its continuity. Okwilagwe continued by saying that students' good reading habits increases in their critical reasoning skill which intimately impart positively on their academic outcomes. By and large, reading habits assist readers to increase their knowledge, wisdom and expand their comprehension capabilities for the achievement of future scholarship goals. Some students who are known to be at the backwaters of reading skills have shown significant progress for participating in extensive reading after cultivating reading habits. Nevertheless, Asagwara (2001) noted that weak reading habits negatively affect students' comprehension. This affects their performance and advancement in Education. In some countries, reading habits is a mirage. In some Ghanaian villages where there is a lack of reading resources and where children do chores and home instead of reading, it is difficult for them to form reading habits (Ameyaw and Anto,

see also Yamoah 2015). So, reading habits is the major prerequisites for academic performances and Achievements.

The findings continue and ends with the hypothesis which states that 'there is no significant difference in the reading habits of male and female undergraduates. The hypothesis is however not rejected at ($t= 1.54$, $df= 816$, $p=0.05$). This agrees with Muchtack and Khen (2012) who noted that gender have no significant relationship with academic achievement of students. Apari and Okebukola (2023) noted that this is a weak positive relationship because the difference is minute and of no significance. The explanation of this position is that, even though, the undergraduates' males and females reading habits is at par, the parity is not strong enough to give vent to the position. Similarly, the study also agrees with Apari (2010) who carried out a study into the reading achievement of males and females disabled readers as measured by word recognition, word analysis and comprehension and discovered that there was no significance difference between the scores of males and females disabled readers. In the same vein, Sotiloye and Popoola (2014) concluded on the foregoing that gender inequality between males and females is a critical issue that is of global concern. In contrary, Gorman, White and Brooks (1998) reported a significant difference in the performance of attitudes between sexes in favor of girls. This research outcome goes on to support the beliefs of neurologists who pointed out clearly that, there is a biological basis for females' good performances in reading achievement tests. While supporting the foregoing, Apari and Okebukola (2023) affirmed that the differences in the mental abilities of male and females are the basis for reading abilities. However, Koammer (2006) opined that girls tend to use both hemisphere of the brain (left and right hemispheres) to think while the boys are predominantly right brained; therefore, he concluded that girls tend to develop academically than boys. Owusu -Acheaw and Larson (2014) disagreed that there was no significant difference in the male and female academic achievements and study habits in a study carried out on the reading habits of higher secondary school students. These students did not

outperform each other on the basis of gender. In the same vein, Okebukola (2012) carried out a study on the impart of gender on the reading skills influencing word recognition, word by word analysis, reading comprehension, the interest and attitudes of emergent readers, and found out that disparity in reading manifest in the advanced stage of reading process. All the evidences sighted above showed that gender is a critical issue in Education. Reading habits is a major literacy concern in pedagogy, and the educators must take this issue very seriously by providing necessary reading materials to both sexes in the libraries and encourage them to engage e- resources every time at school and at home.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the undergraduates in south west Nigeria should sustain their reading habits by visiting the library regularly to read Newspapers, periodicals, and some books of interest in any discipline. They should also be encouraged to consult the same conventional and e- libraries whilst engaging in study reading, writing assignments, as well as, preparing for examinations. Okebukola and Apari (2021) professed that undergraduates should be encouraged to read both intensively and extensively in order to acquire enough word power, content analysis, flexibility, and study method on problem solving skill – being the requisites for effective reading and reading comprehension.

Conclusion

The study revealed that undergraduates in south west Nigeria have good reading habits. This is because some of them from affluent homes have reading materials of interest at home while those not from affluent homes across gender and disciplines have access to conventional and e-library in their higher institutions. Tetfund has the mandate to provide infrastructure, build and equip laborites and libraries in our higher institutions. As a result, every undergraduate has access to the university, faculty, and departmental libraries. This has gone a long way in improving their reading habits. More so, there is no significant difference in the reading habits of male and female undergraduates in south west Nigeria.

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