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Influence of Story Books at Children's Library on Reading Culture of Pupils in Public Primary Schools

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Abstract

Children libraries are libraries established in schools to support learning and teaching activities of pupils. In order to inculcate a good reading culture in pupils, they have to be encouraged to make reading part of their everyday life. Storybooks are useful for introducing new words, concepts and ideas into children's language development, world and imagination. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the influence of storybooks at children's libraries on reading culture among primary classes 4 and 5 pupils in public schools and find out the influence of gender on pupils' reading culture when exposed to storybooks. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted for this study. A total of 35 pupils were assigned to the experimental group while 34 pupils were assigned to the control group. Mean, standard deviation and analysis of covariance were used to analyze data. The results of the study show that storybooks improve the reading culture of pupils in public primary schools. Also, gender did not influence the mean reading culture scores of the pupils after exposure to the storybooks approach, $F(1, 68) = .638$, $p = .427$, partial eta squared = .010. There was also no significant interaction effect of methods and gender on the pupils' mean reading culture, $F(1, 68) = .184$, $p = .669$. Therefore, exposing pupils to storybooks can help improve their culture of reading. The study recommends among others that there should be more storybooks at children's libraries in order to enhance the reading culture of pupils in public primary schools in the study area.

Keywords: Children's library, Pupils, Reading culture, Storybooks

Introduction

Primary education is believed to hold the key to the success or failure of the educational system because it lays the foundation on which other levels of education for national development is built upon. If this must be achieved, serious attention must be given to the reading culture of pupils. It has been observed that the state of facilities such as libraries, books, and furniture that help improve reading culture is low. Parents, teachers and government at all levels are usually called upon to intervene to address the poor reading culture in primary education. This study aims to ascertain the influence of storybooks on reading culture among pupils in public schools and to find out the influence of gender on pupils' reading culture when exposed to storybooks. Stories are passed from one generation to another generation by word of mouth. The use of stories in education is ancient and cuts across races, nations, religions and beliefs (Roby, 2010; Lawani, 2014). Today, stories are written and this has brought about storybooks. Storybooks are books of stories usually for children (Merriam, 2021). In other words, storybooks are books that contain a story or stories, especially for children. In recent times, storybooks are now part of learning experiences that enhances reading.

Reading is an indispensable learning skill that aids all other learning activities and lays the foundation for independent studies and prepares the child for higher educational opportunities (Nalusiba, 2010). Reading refers to the ability to interpret and decode an array of words through a cognitive process (Ayoti, 2015; Enamen, 2015). It is a complex act that deals with communication in written or visual form (Ogwu, 2010). Reading according to Haliru *et al.*, (2015) is a complex process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. It is an act of interpreting meaning from written words (Aina *et al.*, 2011; Ogugua *et al.*, 2015). Reading involves several interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, create, and construct meaning (Ogbonna,

2014). Mikulecky (2011) asserts that reading is a complex conscious and unconscious mental process in which the reader uses a variety of strategies to reconstruct meaning, based on data from the text and the reader's prior knowledge.

Reading is a complex communicative process of receiving and interpreting written words. It involves recognizing what is written and comprehending the matter, understanding the main and subsidiary points as well as links between different parts of the written material. Jegbefume, (2012) posits that while receiving and interpreting the written word, the reader is concerned with four factors, i.e. decoding, comprehending, text analysis and response. Decoding or interpreting in reading refers to the process of changing the coded message into information. As it involves understanding the written language, it requires the ability to recognize words accurately, and how words are used in varying contexts. Comprehension in reading refers to the identification of the central theme, main ideas, supporting details and writing patterns. After decoding and comprehending the literal meaning of a written message, its significance is evaluated and appropriate conclusions are drawn from it. Text analysis is essential for the critical and evaluative understanding of a text. Text analysis refers to the process of identifying relationships among different units within the text in order to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, explicit and implicit information, facts and opinions, examples and ideas and draw inferences and conclusions. Response is our action or reaction to the written message. It completes the reading process as it is the last step of reading. Our response to a text depends largely on our correct understanding and evaluation of the text (Aliyu, 2013).

Reading is a skill which must be consciously developed and nurtured. The more one reads, the more the reading skill develops. Reading improves one's writing, reasoning, communication skills and vocabulary. There is a saying that continuous reading brings about brain automatism. Reading storybooks enhances one's reading culture. Additionally, the

more pupils read storybooks, the more fluent they become and the more their reading culture is enhanced. Reading is a culture that can be acquired, formed, developed and sustained through the provision of the necessary infrastructure like a good functional library, school, education system and parental support (Iloeje, 2014). Culture is an acquired behavioural pattern often followed until it has become a part of one (Orakpor, 2012). Culture refers to the way of life of a particular group of people (Ogugua *et al.*, 2015). This implies that reading can become a way of life or lifestyle for pupils in primary schools. Reading culture, according to Enamen (2015), is an act of engaging in reading regularly. It is a learned practice of seeking knowledge or information through written words or symbols. It is also defined as a culture where reading is part of people's living and constitutes a norm among pupils (Ruterana, 2012). Reading culture is an act of reading as a pattern of behaviour (Orakpor, 2012). It is equally defined as the way of life of people which is characterized by the habit of reading intensively and extensively (Nalusiba, 2010). Reading culture is a dedicated and consistent reading lifestyle (Enamen, 2015). Pupils' reading comprehension difficulties are usually due to poor oral language skills which were previously inherent at the time of school admission (Grolig *et al.*, 2019; Nation *et al.*, 2010). In order to inculcate a good reading culture in pupils, they have to be encouraged to make reading part of their everyday life.

Story Books

Stories play an essential function in children's growth and development both at home and in the school. The home literacy environment is an important contributor to children's storybook exposure (Grolig *et al.*, 2019). Storybooks are useful for introducing new words, concepts and ideas into children's language, world and imagination (Carter, 2021). Storybooks are also essential since in spite of the significant advancement in research which has brought about improvement in our understanding of reading acquisition in recent time, a

considerable percentage of pupils are still experiencing severe difficulties whilst learning to read (Castles et al., 2018; Grolig, 2020). Storybooks read by children contribute to their oral language development (Grolig, 2020) and reading skill acquisition (Riyadi, 2010).

Storybooks exist in various formats and are relevant in promoting reading among schoolchildren. Storybooks such as picture storybooks have the propensity to improve students' reading ability and interest in reading (Roslina, 2017). Storybooks such as the interactive electronic storybooks have been shown to improve students' motivation, comprehension and chromatic concepts (Kao *et al.*, 2017). The animated illustrations of electronic storybooks can bring about a significantly high improvement in students' comprehension scores, ability to retrieve information and make inferences (Ertem, 2010). Also, Heidemann (2012) had earlier observed that electronic storybooks can positively influence student's reading ability. Past research also demonstrated a positive association between storybooks reading and children's engagement in reading (Meyer *et al.*, 1994). Short storybooks are helpful in modifying students' attitude towards reading as well as motivating students to read (Palenfo, 2018). According to recent research by Ratminingsih, Budasi and Kurnia (2020), local culture-based storybooks are effective for improving students' competency in reading.

Children's Library

A library is an institution established to create educational support for both teachers and students. It can be seen as the acquiring, retrieving, processing, disseminating and housing of intellectual materials both print and non-print. Thus, the importance of libraries cannot be overemphasized as it serves as a backbone to teaching in schools and institutions of higher learning. Libraries are places where books, literary documents or records are kept for reference or borrowing. It is also a depository built to contain books and other materials for reading and study. In addition, it is a place where the custom of reading books can be

acquired. Generally, libraries are referred to as a reading hall where pupils gather to consult readable materials for a different purpose.

Children's libraries are special collections of books intended for young readers and usually kept in separate rooms of general public libraries (Lars *et al.*, 2003). Some children's libraries have entire floors or wings dedicated to them in bigger libraries while smaller ones may have a separate room or area for children. They are an educational agency seeking to acquaint the young with the world's literature and to cultivate a love for reading. Their work supplements that of the public schools (Aina, 2004). Services commonly provided by public libraries may include storytelling sessions for infants, toddlers, preschool children, or after-school programs, all to develop early literacy skills and a love of books. One of the most popular programs offered in public libraries is summer reading programs for children, families, and adults (Udomisor *et al.*, 2013).

However, it is important for children's libraries to adequately select materials that would interest the pupils. Children libraries are expected to carry out surveys to investigate materials that would catch the attention of their target audience and acquire such collections. This will arouse the interest of pupils in reading in the children library (Adeyemi, 2021). Ajidahun (2011) posits that any country which wants its people to be informed, articulate, efficient, productive and current, must give priority attention to the development of its libraries. Not only does a library help to inculcate the culture of reading but it also helps to create a thirst for knowledge, which ultimately makes a person humble and open to other people's ideas. Nigeria, like other nations of the world, has an obligation to prepare its citizens for life in a world that is characterized by rapid social, economic, political and technological changes. A library can be a public library, school and children's library.

Children libraries are libraries established in nursery and primary schools to aid and support learning and teaching activities (Redford, 2011). The purpose of establishing

children's libraries is to meet the information needs of pupils in schools. A school library is managed by a school librarian (Busayo, 2011). Children's library provides a range of learning opportunities for pupils with a focus on intellectual content, information literacy, cultural and social development. Children's libraries contain books, films, recorded sound, realia, and digital media. These items are not only for the education, enjoyment, and entertainment of the pupils, but also to enhance their reading culture (Hassen, 2016). Thus, all these are geared towards promoting a reading culture of pupils. A children library according to Ibrahim, (2014) may operate within or outside a school as a teaching and learning centre that provides an active instructional program integrated into curriculum content, with emphasis on the following: resource-based capabilities, thinking-based capabilities, knowledge-based capabilities, reading and literacy capabilities, personal and interpersonal capabilities and learning management capabilities. The children library exists to provide a range of learning opportunities with a focus on intellectual content and information literacy. Children libraries are similar to public libraries in that they contain storybooks, films, recorded sound, realia, and digital media. A storybook ignites a passion for reading and reading culture among pupils, which inevitably places the library at the centre of the twenty-first-century reading and learning experience.

According to Aina *et al.*, (2011), there is also an overriding desire among pupils to spend more time with their friends and peers playing than remain at home reading. Children glue more to televisions, watching cartoons, home videos as a way of enjoying their leisure instead of reading. This therefore may lead to a decline or poor reading culture. Aina, *et al* (2011) also opined that delinquency, school violence, and even incidence of examination malpractice have a higher correlation with poor reading culture. With poor reading culture eating deep among pupils in public primary schools, it has become necessary for schools to promote and instill a culture of reading among Nigerian children.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of storybooks on the reading culture of pupils in public schools?
2. What is the influence of gender on pupils' reading culture when exposed to storybooks?
3. Is there significant interaction effect of method and gender on the pupils' mean reading culture?

Methodology

Ethical approval for this study which was conducted among primary school pupils in Enugu State, Nigeria was obtained from Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Nigeria. The quasi-experimental research design was adopted for this investigation. Intact classes comprising primary 4 and 5 pupils were used for this research. A total of 35 pupils (50.7%) were assigned to the experimental group, and were exposed to storybooks and the other 34 pupils (49.3%) were assigned to the control group and were not exposed to storybooks but were exposed to the usual classroom teaching. Out of the 35 pupils assigned to the experimental group, 17 were males (50%) while 18 were females (51.4%). In the control group, out of 34 pupils, 17 were males (50%) while 17 were females (48.6%). The pupils' mean age was $9.20 \pm .92$ years. To determine the baseline status of pupils in the experimental and control groups before the experimental process, the 15-item with four-point rating scale questionnaire (Strongly agree to Strongly disagree)– Reading Culture Questionnaire (RCQ) – was administered to the pupils as a pretest in the first week. The RCQ was validated by experts in Childhood Education and Library and Information Science. Trial testing of the RCQ was carried out outside the study area. The internal consistency of the RCQ was determined and results showed that it is

reliable for research purposes using Cronbach's alpha (0.84). One week was given to the pupils before the implementation of the storybooks approach.

During the implementation period, pupils in the experimental group were given storybooks intervention. On the other hand, pupils in the control group were exposed to the usual classroom teaching. At the end of the two-week implementation, the reading culture questionnaire (RCQ) was administered as a posttest. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive statistics by group and gender

Group	Gender		Pretest	Posttest
Experimental Group	Male	N	17	17
		Mean	24.88	43.94
		SD	2.06	2.28
	Female	N	18	18
		Mean	26.39	44.33
		SD	1.85	2.17
	<i>Total</i>	N	35	35
		Mean	25.66	44.14
		SD	2.07	2.19
Control Group	Male	N	17	17
		Mean	27.53	33.94
		SD	0.79	0.83
	Female	N	17	17
		Mean	28.12	34.06
		SD	0.93	0.83
	<i>Total</i>	N	34	34
		Mean	27.82	34.00
		SD	0.90	0.82

Data in Table 1 shows the mean reading culture of the pupils by group and gender before and after their exposure to the storybooks. The pretest reading culture score for the experimental group was 25.66 ± 2.07 while their posttest reading culture score was 44.14 ± 2.19 . The pretest reading culture score for the control group was 27.82 ± 0.90 while their posttest reading culture score was 34.00 ± 0.82 . This suggests an improvement in the reading

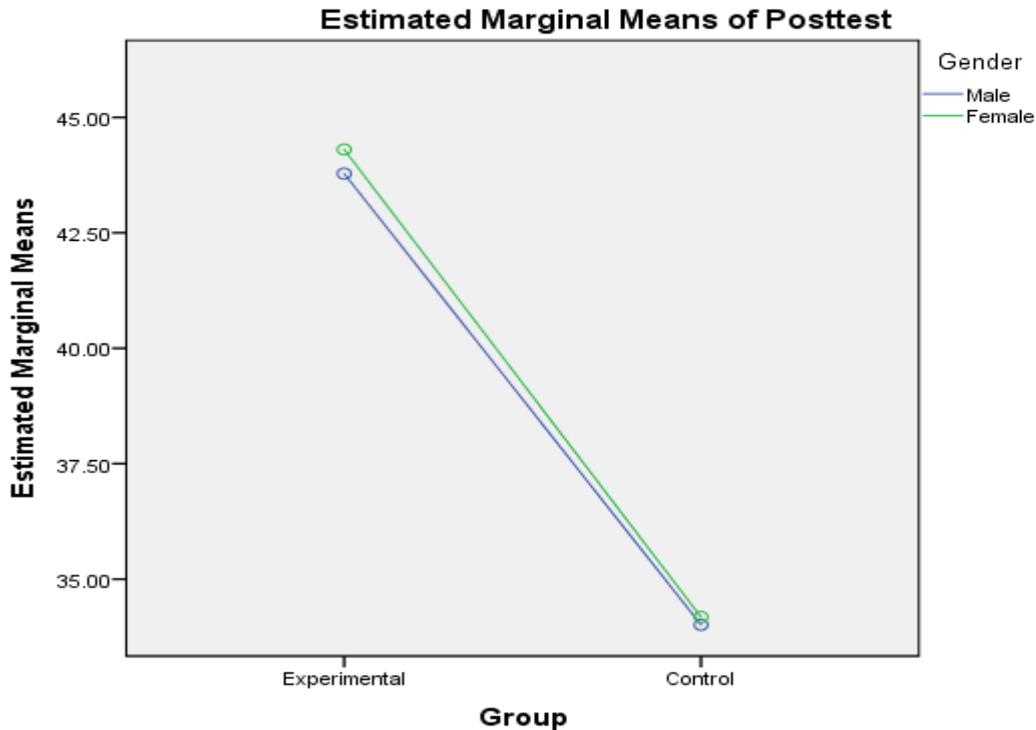
culture of the pupils after exposure to the storybooks method. By gender, the posttest reading culture score of the males (43.94 ± 2.28) in the experimental group seems similar to those of the females (44.33 ± 2.17) in the same experimental group.

Table 2: ANCOVA results on the influence of storybooks on reading culture of pupils in public schools and gender influence

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1776.860 ^a	4	444.215	154.770	.000	.906
Intercept	358.701	1	358.701	124.976	.000	.661
Pretest	1.133	1	1.133	.395	.532	.006
Group	1100.486	1	1100.486	383.423	.000	.857
Gender	1.832	1	1.832	.638	.427	.010
Group * Gender	.528	1	.528	.184	.669	.003
Error	183.690	64	2.870			
Total	107691.000	69				
Corrected Total	1960.551	68				

^a. R Squared = .906 (Adjusted R Squared = .900)

Data in Table 2 shows that there was a significant positive influence of the storybooks approach on the reading culture of pupils in public primary schools, $F(1, 68) = 383.423$, $p = .000$, partial eta squared = .857. Therefore, the storybooks approach appeared to have yielded more improvement in the pupils' reading culture compared to the conventional approach. Also, gender did not influence the mean reading culture scores of the pupils after exposure to the storybooks approach, $F(1, 68) = .638$, $p = .427$, partial eta squared = .010. Finally, there was no significant interaction effect of method and gender on the pupils' mean reading culture, $F(1, 68) = .184$, $p = .669$, partial eta squared = .003. Figure 1 further demonstrates the interaction effects of methods and gender as shown below.



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pretest = 26.7246

Figure 1: Interaction effect of method and gender on pupils’ reading culture

Table 3: Posthoc analysis of effects of the methods applied on reading culture

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^b	95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b
Experimental	Control	9.947*	.508	.000	8.932, 10.962
Control	Experimental	-9.947*	.508	.000	10.962, -8.932

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

^b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

Data in Table 3 shows the mean reading culture score of pupils in experimental and control groups with a more significant mean gain observable in pupils who were in the experimental group (Mean difference =9.947; SE=.508, 95%CI= 8.932, 10.962).

This study revealed that storybooks enhance the reading culture of pupils in public schools since there was a significant mean difference in the reading culture scores of pupils exposed to storybooks in the experimental group compared to pupils in the control group.

The study also found no significant difference in the reading culture score of male and female pupils in public primary school exposed to storybooks intervention. This result agrees with Katherine *et al.*, (2013) assertion that storybooks enhance pupils reading culture and influences children's school outcomes. According to Roslina (2017), storybooks influence the reading culture of pupils. Strouse, Nyhout and Ganea (2018) opined that a child who reads storybooks builds a good reading culture. The authors further asserted that storybooks encourage pupils to read and have a good reading culture.

Developing a reading culture involves motivating pupils (Ibrahim, 2014). Reading should be seen as a leisure activity if a strong reading culture must be developed. Developing a strong reading culture takes quality time, dedication and consistency. Related literature has acknowledged that strong reading culture is beneficial to pupils and the nation at large (Ogugua *et al.*, 2015). Reading culture is a routine and repetitive behaviour, it is not instinctive like hunger or thirst. Good reading culture may lead pupils in the right direction. Therefore, to develop a good reading culture, pupils need to be exposed to reading strategies, storybooks (Dike, 2017).

The promotion of reading culture cannot take place in a vacuum. It has to be initiated. Enabling reading culture among pupils in primary schools requires a publishing industry, which must engage a cadre of appropriate writers and produce their work in a pleasing form. A system of distribution, which may include bookstores, and libraries are needed. It is very important to recognize that, parents, teachers, and librarians have vital roles to play among pupils in public primary schools to enable them to embark on voracious reading and developing good reading culture. Children's and school libraries should also organize programmes, book clubs, storybooks, pictures, computers storytelling and use them to inculcate reading culture among pupils. Therefore, the study recommends that there should be more storybooks at children's libraries in order to enhance the reading culture among pupils

in public schools. Secondly, the school authorities should employ qualified school librarians to be in charge of the children's libraries. Government should equip the existing children's libraries with good, up-to-date, and sufficient library resources. In addition, the ministry of education should introduce library periods into the school curriculum. Local governments should promote reading through school-based organisations such as the press and reading clubs.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the effects of storybooks at children's libraries on reading culture among pupils in public schools. We conclude that storybooks enhance reading culture among pupils in public schools since there is a significant difference in the performance of pupils exposed to storybooks in the experimental group compared to pupils in the control group. Lastly, there was no significant mean difference in reading culture of male and female pupils in public primary school when exposed to storybooks. Therefore, exposing pupils to storybooks can help improve their culture of reading.

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