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## READING HABITS OF UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITIES IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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**READING HABITS OF UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITIES IN DELTA  
STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the research were to find out the reading habits of undergraduates and the problems militating against effective reading among them. In carrying out this study, two research questions were raised. Descriptive survey design was utilized for the study. The population of the study was forty-three thousand, five hundred (43,500) undergraduates in three universities in Delta State. The sample size for this study was 500. These universities include: Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State University, Abraka and Western Delta University, Oghara. Four hundred and fifty-two (452) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and found usable. Proportionate stratified random sampling techniques was used for this study. The instruments used for this study was a researcher developed questionnaire with the title “Reading Habits of Undergraduates Questionnaire”. Data were analysed using frequencies and percentage. Finding from this study showed that the reading habits of undergraduates in Delta State was low. Distraction from the social media/Internet, lack of interest in reading, distraction from friends and non-availability of books were the reason for the decline in undergraduates reading habits. The study recommended among others that university management should ensure the provision of well-equipped library in order to attract undergraduates to come to the library to read. This can be achieved by making available relevant information technologies that will enable the use of social media for educational purpose. Also, lecturers should engage undergraduates in several assignments and presentations and these should form a greater part of their assessment process.

Key words: Reading Habits, Habits, Undergraduates, Delta State, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Reading is seen as essential for the general development and growth of a human being. However, with the advent of current digital technologies, particularly the increasing popularity of social media networks on the web, televisions, mobile phones and other means of entertainment, the reading habit of the public in general, especially undergraduates, is undergoing severe deterioration (Akanda, Hoq & Hasan, 2013). Reading is a very significant activity that permits undergraduates to gain access to knowledge. Through reading, a person has access to a wide range of knowledge found in various reading materials such as magazines, books, journals, newspapers and other electronic sources that are used to acquire knowledge. The ability to read is important to one's success in life. It is therefore a skill that has to be inculcated in a person from childhood (Özbay, 2016).

Undergraduates' inherent capacity to read is one of the critical causes of his/her educational success or failure. For undergraduates to succeed in life, not only in the field of education but in life in general, they must obtain the habit of reading to in order perform well in their intellectual activities. However, one of the major problem confronting the educational system in Nigeria is the failure of undergraduates in examinations (Toker & Aminou, 2019).

The habit of reading is an important life skill which enables one to be abreast of information. It is not limited to increase in knowledge but it also builds character and maturity, sharpens thinking, and widens awareness in economic, social, political, and environmental issues (Toker & Aminou, 2019). Reading is not a process that is inculcated by chance, as it takes efforts and hard work. Inculcating a reading habit pays off handsomely in our lives either indirectly or directly (Oribabor, 2014).

Reading is described as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message. It is an exercise which involves the organs of sight and the

thinking faculty, working together to interpret a printed message so as to understand it. Reading skills keep a person to be informed and current about happenings in different fields and careers and thus are strongly related to economic success and educational achievement of undergraduates in tertiary institutions (Collins & Cheek, 1999).

Poor and low reading abilities at an early age can lead to an overall dislike of school and can increase the risk of dropout. Struggling readers also tend to feel more negatively toward reading in school, making it challenging for school reading programs to be operational and effective for these students especially undergraduates. Reading is an important gateway to personal growth and development, and to social, economic and civic life (Lyons, 2012). It is generally accepted as a way for reaching out to new information and assumed to be consistent with the comprehension capabilities of individuals (Özbay, 2016).

According to Oribabor (2014), it is sad to note that in Nigeria reading habits of undergraduates in tertiary institutions is deficient. This is because most students believe that education and reading is a long term project which does not yield immediate dividend but, if at all, future money. Nowadays young people especially students find it difficult to wait for a long time to make fortune; and because they want immediate money through treacherous means they venture into business, Internet fraud and politics that brings money quickly. A poor reading habit therefore does not only affect proficiency in the English language and other subjects, it possibly affects the coordination of some body parts (Oribabor, 2014). Therefore, this study seeks to find out the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

In recent times, the reading habits of undergraduates have become a concern to librarians, educators, researchers and policy makers. Reading habits are well-planned and

deliberate pattern of study that has attained a form of consistency on the part of the undergraduates toward understanding academic subjects and passing at examinations (Owusu-acheaw & Larson, 2014; Onuoha and Unegbu, 2011). Therefore, undergraduates need to cultivate a good reading habit in order for them to succeed in their educational pursuit.

In its simple terms, reading is the mental and complex psychological process of decoding symbols to fashioning and deriving meaning from the written text. It is a means of language acquisition, qualify communication, exchange of information, and ideas. The symbols involved in the reading process are typically visual (written or printed), but in some instances, they can be decoded in a particular format like braille. The importance of reading to humans overall cannot be overemphasized, primarily as information and messages are now being disseminated through the printed materials (Toker & Aminou, 2019).

Reading means different things to different people; hence people engage in reading for different reasons. To a lot of people, especially undergraduates, reading is done mainly to pass examinations and not because of the knowledge to be gained. Some read for pleasure and relaxation while a few are likely to read for self-improvement in life (Aina, Ogungbemi, & Adigun, 2011).

Ogbomo and Ivwighreghweta (2020) investigated the reading habits and academic performance of library and information science undergraduates in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. Findings revealed that the reading habits of the undergraduates was good. There was a significant relationship between reading habits academic performance among the undergraduates. The study recommended among others that lecturers in the department of library and information science should engage undergraduates in several assignments and presentations and these should form a greater part of their assessment process.

Okolo and Ivwighreghweta (2020) in their study found out that the reading habits of undergraduates in Michael and Cecilia Ibru University, (MCIU) Agbarha-Otor revealed that the undergraduates spent majorly two to four hours in reading in a day. Series of assignment poor library environment, personal busy schedule, poor lightings and lack of books were majorly the factors that affect the reading habits of the undergraduates either positively or negatively, it also revealed that good reading habits helps to boost a person's reading speed, widens ones experiences and knowledge, makes one to keep informed of what is happening per time, it serves as a means of entertainment and above all, it brings about excellent performance in any given task.

Toker and Aminou (2019) in their study indicated that there were some linguistic causes responsible for the decline in reading habits among undergraduates. They include the adverse impact of the Internet, the lack of interest, television addiction, and the lack of books made reading difficult. The study concluded by reiterating the vital importance of reading not just for the individuals but the nation at large.

Nwokocha (2014) investigated some secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja Nigeria. The study revealed that more of the boarding students read regularly because they have programmed time for reading in their curriculum, they sometimes borrow and use library books. Day students read occasionally especially during examination as they were more involved in non-academic social chores. In their academic performances, more boarders were above average than the day students. Teachers and parents were encouraged to train the mind of their wards towards reading and reduce their home and school chores.

Oribabor, (2014) examined students' reading culture and the factors influencing their reading habits. It also established the link between reading culture and oral English learning and found out the position of teachers on the teaching of oral English. Interview and

questionnaire were used to collect data from thirty senior secondary school students in Ilesa West Local Government Area. Findings showed that students reading habit was poor, a number of factors were responsible for students' poor reading culture. It also showed a relationship between reading culture and learning of Oral English. Findings also showed that many teachers do not pay attention to the teaching of oral English.

Onuoha and Unegbu (2013) investigated the reading habits and library use patterns of undergraduates in the department of Information Resources Management, Babcock University, Nigeria. Findings indicated that most of the respondents spend more than an hour reading every day. The purpose of reading was mainly for entertainment. The study concluded that undergraduates engage in reading activates both for entertainment and education purposes although most reading activities took place outside the university library. The study recommended that undergraduates should make regular use of the university library in order to acquire valuable practical experience. It was also recommended that they should explore the use of e-books especially through the internet as this would afford them the opportunity of reading books which may not be available in the university library.

Olubunmi (2018) investigated the reading habits of university undergraduates and how it has impacted their academics. Four research questions guided the study. The questionnaire was used for data collection. The study revealed a high perception of reading among the undergraduates. The undergraduates agreed that there exists a relationship between reading habits and their academic performance. Though there is a decline in reading, this can be addressed by inculcating reading as a subject into the academic curriculum at the tertiary level. Other means are establishing reading clubs/centres/clinics in and around the higher institutions. The paper therefore recommended that lecturers should be equipped with trainings that will make them teach reading effectively.



## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. find out the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria;
2. to determine the reason for the decline in the reading habits of undergraduates;

## **Research Questions**

The following research question guided this study:

1. What are the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria?
2. What are the reason for the decline in the reading habits of undergraduates?

## **Method**

The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was Forty-Three Thousand, Five Hundred undergraduates (43,500) in three universities in Delta State. The sample size for this study was 500. Four hundred and fifty-two (452) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and found usable. The Proportionate stratified random sampling techniques was used for this study. Frequencies and percentage were used to analyse the data.

## Findings

The findings of the study are presented in the following tables with explanations

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Institutions**

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	66	13.2
Delta State University, Abraka	411	82.2
Western Delta University, Oghara	23	4.6

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to their institutions and their sample size. It reveals that 66 (13.2%) of the respondents were from the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, 411 (82.2%) were the Delta State University, Abraka while Western Delta University, Oghara had 23 (4.6%). This shows that there are more undergraduates in the Delta State University, Abraka.

**Table 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	186	41.2
Female	266	58.8

Table 2 reveals that there are 186 (41.2%) male undergraduates while there are 266 (58.8%). This shows that there are more female undergraduates in university in Delta State.

**Table 3:** Age Range of the Respondents

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
15-20yrs	107	23.7
21-25yrs	279	61.7
26-30yrs	43	9.5
31yrs and above	23	5.1

Table 3 shows that there are 279 (61.7%) undergraduates that are within the age range of 21-25 years, 107 (23.7%) of them that are within the age range of 15-20 years, 43 (9.5%) of them are within the age range of 26-30 years and 23 (5.1%) of them are within the age range of 31 years and above. This implies that majority of the undergraduates in universities in Delta states are within the age range of 21-25 years.

**Research Question 1:** What are the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

**Table 4: Reading Habits of Undergraduate**

Reading Habits	SA		A		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I spend less than an hour reading every day.	69	15.2	115	25.4	204	45.1	64	14.1
I read more than an hour a day.	111	24.5	42	9.2	100	22.1	199	44.0
Read on a weekly basis.	51	11.2	101	22.3	149	32.9	151	33.4
Enjoy reading a lot	179	39.6	41	9.0	200	44.2	32	7.0
Read to pass examination.	321	71.0	-	-	100	22.1	31	6.8
I spend my free period reading.	72	15.9	81	17.9	210	46.4	89	19.6
Not easily distracted by friends when it is time to read.	32	7.0	104	23.0	118	26.1	198	43.8
I do my reading in the library.	201	44.4	51	11.2	151	33.4	49	10.8
Read other materials to get more information on the topic taught.	91	20.1	111	24.5	50	11.0	200	44.2
I prefer to read electronic materials instead of the ones in print format.	301	66.5	20	4.9	100	22.1	31	6.8
I read in a quiet place.	212	46.9	40	8.8	150	33.1	50	11.0
I read choice courses i.e. courses that i like best.	194	42.9	45	9.9	150	33.1	63	13.9
I read to upgrade knowledge.	63	13.9	121	26.7	201	44.6	67	14.8
I read for leisure.	81	17.9	104	23.0	67	14.8	200	44.2
Have group discussions with my course mates after reading.	201	44.4	31	6.8	110	24.3	110	24.3
I read my books every day.	51	11.3	81	17.9	184	40.7	136	30.0

Table 4 shows the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Majority of the questions listed in the table had low responses. It is interesting to see

that 204 (45.1%) and 64 (14.1%) of the undergraduates spend less than an hour reading every day. Also, 200 (44.2%) and 32 (7.0%) indicated that they don't enjoy reading.

**Research Question 2:** What are the reason for the decline in undergraduates reading habits?

**Table 5: Reason for the Decline in Undergraduates Reading Habits**

<b>Decline in Undergraduates Reading Habits</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Distraction from friends	60	13.3
Distraction from the social media/Internet	222	49.1
Lack of interest	100	22.1
Non-availability of books	30	6.6
All of the above	40	8.8

Table 5 shows the reasons for the decline in the reading habits of undergraduates. The majority of the respondents 222 (49.1%) identified the use of social media tools/ Internet and lack of interest towards reading 100 (22.1%) to be the most important factors that stops them from engaging in reading.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study showed that was a downward trend in the reading habit of undergraduates in universities in Delta State. This may be as a result of the fact they were addicted to the social media to the detriment of their academics. This finding is in agreement with the study of Oribabor (2014) who in his study of students' reading habits revealed that students reading habit was poor. He noted that in Nigeria reading habits is deficient because most undergraduates believe that reading does not bring quick money, they believe that education and reading is a long term project which does not yield instant dividend but, future money. This finding is also in contrast to the study of Ogbomo and Ivwighrehweta (2020) who investigated the reading habits and academic performance of library and information science

undergraduates in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria whose findings revealed that the reading habits of the undergraduates was good.

Majority of the respondents identified the use of social media tools/ Internet and lack of interest towards reading to be the most important factors that stops them from engaging in reading. This may be due to the fact that undergraduates are drifting to the use of the Internet in order to satisfy their information needs. This finding support the study of Willingham (2010) who stated that undergraduates who make use of social media sites for long periods of time or multi task have an increased risk of not being able to achieve the educational outcomes of their courses. Toker and Aminou (2017) in their study indicated the effect of the Internet, lack of interest, television addiction, and the lack of books was responsible for the reading difficult of undergraduates of Economics Department at the Nile University of Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that the reading habits of undergraduates in universities in Delta State was low. This clearly indicated that there is a downward trend in their reading habits. It is sad to note that some of the undergraduate indicated that they spend less than an hour reading every day and that they don't enjoy reading. Distraction from the social media/Internet, lack of interest in reading, distraction from friends and non-availability of books were some of reason for the decline in undergraduates reading habits.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Lecturers should engage undergraduates in several assignments and presentations and these should form a greater part of their assessment process.

2. University Management should ensure the provision of well-equipped library in order to attract undergraduates to come to the library to read. This can be achieved by making available relevant information technologies that will enable the use of social media for educational purpose.
3. Parents should give books as gifts to their children on special occasions such as on birthdays, during matriculation and even upon graduation. This will surely enable undergraduates attach value not only to reading but to books generally
4. University lecturers should ensure the establishment reading club, so as to enhance excellent reading habit among undergraduates.

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