The Influence Of School Libraries Usage In Promoting Reading Culture Among Secondary School Students In Rivers State, Nigeria

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THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES USAGE IN PROMOTING
READING CULTURE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of school libraries usage in promoting reading culture among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Six secondary schools were selected from the three senatorial districts in Rivers State. The study adopted survey design. The population of the study consisted of students. The sample of the study comprised 384 students. Rating scale was used as instruments of data collection. Mean score and correlation coefficient were used in answering the research questions while t-test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Result revealed that there is a significant relationship between availability of information resources and students reading culture. Utilization of school library and students’ reading habit are significantly related. It was recommended, that adequate information resources – both book and non-book information resources should be made available in the school libraries; Students should be encouraged to use the library not only during the official time, but whenever they have need for it and conducive environment that enhance students’ patronage to the library should be provided.

Keywords: Reading Culture, Rivers State, School Libraries, Secondary School, Students
Introduction

The function of reading in the development of human life and his society cannot be overemphasized as it adds quality to life and is a pathway to the future. Simply put, reading is a basic building block for learning. It is a necessity for full participation in contemporary society. In effect, reading in its entirety and variety is necessary for being better informed. It stimulates imagination, widens views, expands horizons, encourages quick learning and helps in learning about different people and places. Generally, reading invokes curiosity and imagination that leads to skills for handling complex ideas and issues.

In an age when browsing the net, playing with funky handsets and passing non-stop short message service (SMSs) seem to be the order of the day, reading a book in a peaceful corner of a library has become an archaic idea for most people. While technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing into thin air. The achievement of quality basic education in all countries in Africa call for development of good reading habits of both children and adult. This will change the stigma already associated with Africa as a continent with a “Poor Reading Culture” (Tella and Akande, 2007).

The art of reading can be an interesting experience for children and adolescents if they are properly guided. It is a common saying that students are the future leaders, invariably, every child is a potential leader. To this effect, it is noted that leaders are made and not just born. Ilogho (2015) argued that though most people may have the potentials to become effective leaders, it takes time to discover and develop these potentials. Until these potentials are discovered, the teachers must ensure that the students have good reading culture. Students training include teaching and helping them cultivate a good reading habit.

Reading habit refers to the frequency of reading, and the average time spent on reading materials. It is also the culture or habit that enables one to imbibe reading and studying as a
basis of growth and development. For the purpose of this study, the two terms “reading culture” and “reading habit” will be used interchangeably as they are mutually exclusive or inseparable. Nssien (2007) states that, reading culture is a process of building up positive reading attitude among students and children over time. Although, when an individual habitually and regularly read books and other information materials that are not necessarily required of him to advance in his/her profession or career, he or she is also said to have a reading culture. One interesting legacy to hand down to students is teaching them to become life-long learners through reading and love of books. Once this culture is inculcated in them, their ability to study independently and excel academically will increase. Also, they can surmount future challenges in life when they have good reading culture. To promote reading culture among students, a library is needed in secondary schools.

A library is a place of information or a place of lending information resources that leads to acquisition of knowledge. It is essential for promotion of reading culture in students. The information resources (reading materials) available in the library unveils an opportunity for the students to find information or reading materials and read by themselves. For the purpose of this study, the library to be discussed is the school library.

School libraries are those libraries in nursery, primary and secondary schools, and they are located in the school premises. Their primary aim is to support the learning activities of the school, and inculcate good reading habit in the students. No wonder why it is stipulated in the functions of school libraries that part of its role is to promote the development of reading skills and encourage long-term learning habits. Learning habits form the key to continuous success in school, as well as personal enrichment of the students/pupils. To enable the school library fulfill its role of promoting reading culture, it provides not only books but items such as motion pictures, video tapes, slides, educational materials, etc as library collections. The books in this
library include; fiction and non-fiction books and books on other subject matters. Books on current affairs keep them abreast of current happenings. The school library is the child’s first exposure to library use.

The reason for establishing school libraries is for them to serve as a pivot for reading and promoting reading habit among school children. The school library brings together books and other formats of literacy materials and the readers under the expert guidance of a certified or professional librarian for the promotion of a sustainable reading culture. Apart from provision of reading materials, school libraries provide reading programmes that motivate students to read for pleasure. Reading programmes are reading activities school libraries provide to create awareness of the collections and motivate students to read for pleasure. It is on this basis that the researcher wishes to investigate the influence of school libraries usage in promoting reading culture among students in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of school libraries usage in promoting reading culture among secondary school students in Rivers State. The specific aims of the study were to:

1. examine the relationship between the availability of information resources and students’ reading habits;
2. determine the extent of utilization of school libraries in secondary schools in Rivers state;
   and
3. examine the relationship between the utilization of the library and students’ reading habit;

**Hypotheses**

The following Null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 of significant level.
HO₁: There is no significant relationship between the level of availability of library resources and the students reading habit.

HO₂: The relationship between students’ utilization of library resources do not differ significantly from their reading habit.

**Literature Review**

Information resources are necessary to enable the school library fulfill its functions among which are: to systematically provide information resources required for the school’s educational programmes and to assist in improving and increasing the reading skills and learning habits of students. Library resources are vital tools in education, it aids the teaching and learning process of students. The resources encompass all persons and things that are capable, in one way or the other, of conveying information, values, processes, experiences and techniques that can be used to actively engage 'learners’ in the learning process (Akpochafo, 2003). The teaching and learning of students at the secondary school level, require diverse human and material resources.

According to Odusanya and Amusa (2004), library provides an atmosphere for self education and self-development of individual student and public in general. It is expected to bring its services within the reach of every adult member of the public and every child in the school irrespective of their social and mental status; and also to provide resources of all types on all subjects for students at various levels and classes.

Dike (2004) also opined that the modern school library stands at the very centre of educational programme of the school, it is often referred to as the heart of the school or as the laboratory of laboratories. This is because modern education is resources based; the resources for teaching and learning are to be found in the school resource centre which is the other name for
the school library whose central mission is supporting the curriculum, furthering the teaching and learning programme of the school.

The demand for resources-driven knowledge is expanding exponentially and this increase can be attributed to the global challenges for educational development triggered by advocacy for the provision of appropriate and modern innovative information communication technological devices that are regarded as the basis for the acquisition of higher levels of skills and qualifications for future development (Katz, 2001).

The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) among others, realising the need for availability of library resources in the learning environments have immensely contributed in diverse ways to the provision of instructional resources in Nigeria. While some organisations, according to Aina and Adekenye (2013), have helped to set up micro-teaching and language laboratory, others have assisted some states in Nigeria to establish resource centres.

The importance of library resources was also stressed by Fayose (2000) when she explained that library resources are very vital to study and teaching. She explained that library resources are the resources required by students for their study. The resources, according to her, consist of recommended textbooks, books to support class tests, journals, past examination papers, reference books, monographs, while research materials are used by higher degree students and lecturers.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), however, expressed that the effectiveness of any availability of library resources in education is when the resources are accessible to users in a library or any learning resources centre even when such learning material are bibliographically relevant to one’s subject of interest. Therefore, the more accessible information sources are the ones that are regularly used. Obru (2004) corroborated this when he identified natural and artificial barriers to
free access to information. He added that a library’s poor reputation is attributed to lack of accessibility to information sources.

Utilization of library resources among secondary school students, simply refer to the use of library among students in secondary schools. School library has been described as the heart of the school, school libraries had two principal objectives both of which are still important today: to provide materials to support the curriculum and to promote reading habit. This view is supported by Apotiade (2002) who identified the role of school library as encouragement of reading habit, and development of student’s ability to learn from books. He further elucidated that the school library is to provide books and other information materials that will assist the students in their studies, instruct students on the use of library resources and encourage recreational reading by providing newspaper, magazines, books on sports, adventure, hobbies, folklores and fictions.

According to Moruf (2015) one ingredient that promotes the utilization of school libraries is the presence of a school librarian who personalizes the services of the library media centres therefore, hold and demonstrates authentic concerns for the intellectual, moral, spiritual, social and cultural well-being of each students, no matter how rich, poor or brilliant. He must consistently build his knowledge of the students as he works with them as mentor, counsellor and friend. Thus after the school librarian has introduced the students to variety of learning resources, he needs to teach study skills required to use the learning resources in the library. Similarly, Owate and Okpa (2013) stated that the school library is a collection of wide variety of resources centrally organized by staff, professionally prepared to offer services to students and teachers that will enrich and support educational enterprises. This means a school library assists and supports the programs of schools by storing instructional materials for use in teaching and learning (Ifidon, 1996). Akanwa (2012) posited that the school library should provide the
following services to students: quiz competition, debates, book competition, book talk and story hour which will help promoting reading culture.

One quality a school library will need to promote reading culture in secondary school is the physical attraction in terms of space, arrangement, equipment furniture and fittings etc. According to Surendram (2014) in order to promote reading habits amongst students or children, school libraries require both printed and electronic resources. In addition to it, to organize different activities school libraries need space to satisfy the emerging needs of the young generation. When good intentions meet bad planning, library users pay the price (Woodward, 2007). Space planning involves determining how large spaces within a building are arranged and relate to each other within a larger area. Thus, the space needed for a school library should forecast and meet a future need, based on school library strength, projected collection and services aim. The school library is created and maintained to serve and support the educational activities of the school. It is either made attractive to sustain educational activities and promote reading culture or it will repel students or children and further engender poor reading culture. It is fundamental to a school library to equip students with lifelong learning skills and enabling them to live as ideal and responsible citizens. For Surendran, he further posited that school library should be located in an area of maximum accessibility to the students and the teachers. It should have good ventilation and ample area to conduct other activities, this is to achieve maximum.

The introduction of school library media centre and programs are integral to students’ achievements and promotion of reading culture; this is because they provide all students and staff members with equitable and timely access to ideas and information. Through integrated programmes, school libraries media specialist (librarians) ensure that students and staff are
effective users of ideas and information resources. This goes a long way in promoting reading amongst students in secondary schools.

In general, from most studies seen, the use of school libraries are restricted by mainly the time of use and the effects of regulations on use respectively. Thus the most common time for students to use school libraries are only within school session hours or class visits, and such times are fixed. On the other hand, the effects on regulation of use, the number of students visiting school libraries in general is lower than it might have been because school regulations restricts visits for specific reasons because the hours of operation are not compatible with the schedule of students (e.g. not open when students go early, early closing, no evening hours, open when schools are in session and no lending) (Burke, 1996).

According to Maliki and Uche (2007), it is important to note that both the home and the school background are bound to influence effective utilization of the library and its abundant resources among secondary school student and consequently reflect on their performance and achievement. This is because the type of home a student comes may determine his awareness of library facilities, how to use them and their external values.

In line with previous works, Owate and Okpa (2013) confirmed that students use school libraries only during school hours. School authorizes also promote the use of libraries but do not properly plan for who will man the libraries even after school hours because there were neither librarians nor library attendance to take care of the students’ information needs. In furtherance to this, Ashaver and Muese (2014) collaborated that school libraries do not hold library display days/events thus they do not use library regularly due to lack of user education and also the materials are not properly organized on the shelves. Most school libraries lack audio visual materials in their collection and there are no promotional activities like book talk, library week, library club and reading competition (Lulu-Pokubo, 2014).
Research Methods

The study adopted the survey design and correlation study. The population of the study consists of students and teacher librarians. Correlational study is a type of design made to discover to or clarify relationships through the use of correlation coefficients (Uzomah, 2014). It is usually used to measure the relationship between variables in a study. In this study, the correlational design is used to examine the relationship between availability of information resources and students’ reading habit and utilization of library resources and students’ reading habit.

The sample of the study comprised 384 students. Rating scale was used as instruments of data collection. The instrument was validated and the test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Mean score and correlation coefficient were used in answering the research question while t-test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between the availability of information resources and students reading habit?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between the level of availability of library resources and the students reading habit.

Table 1: Correlation Coefficient of Relationship between Availability of Library Resources and Students Reading Habit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>P-Level</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of library resources</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32.07</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading habit</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.21</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result as indicated in table I shows that the mean level of availability of library resources is 32.07 whereas the students’ extent of disposition to positive reading habit is 16.21. The correlation coefficient of the students’ responses on availability of library resources is 0.592. The relationship between the students reading habit and the availability of library resources is therefore 0.592. This gives a positive and moderate relationship between the two variables. Further analysis based on this relationship resulted to a P-Level of .000 which is lower than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternative is accepted. The decision therefore is that there is a significant relationship between the availability of library resources and students reading habit.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent do students utilize school libraries in the secondary schools?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Extent of Utilization of School Library**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I use the school library daily.</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>VLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I use the library only when I have assignment.</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>VLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I visit the library during examination period only.</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>VLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I visit the library on my teachers’ instruction.</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>VLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I visit my school library periodically.</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>HE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Very High Extent (VHE) = 3.50 – 4.0; High Extent (HE) = 3.0 – 3.99; Low Extent (LE) = 2.0 – 2.99; and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 0 – 1.99

The result presented in table 2 shows that the students’ use of the library daily, use the library only when they have assignment, use of the library during examination period only and visit the library on teachers’ instruction are at very low extent, with mean scores of 1.77, 1.97,
1.52 and 1.89 respectively. While using the library periodically is to a high extent with mean score of 3.09. The mean of 3.09 indicates that students do not use the school library frequently.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relationship between the utilization of the school library and students reading habit?

**Hypothesis Two:** The relationship between students utilization of library resources do not differ significantly from their reading habit.

**Table 3: Correlation Coefficient of Utilization of Library Resources and Students Reading Habit.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>P-Level</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of library resources</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.21</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading habit</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.21</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result as shown in table 3 indicates that the mean responses of the students on the utilization of library resources and students reading habits are 16.21 and 13.22 respectively. The correlation coefficient of these students’ responses on utilization and reading habit is 0.143. This shows that there is a positive low relationship between the students’ utilization of school libraries and their reading habits.

Further analysis reveals that this correlation coefficient resulted from a significance level of 0.005 which is smaller than the chosen level of significance of 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected and alternative accepted showing that there is a significant relationship between the students’ utilization of library resources and their reading habits.
Discussion of Findings

The three research questions posed for this study on ‘the influence of school libraries usage in promoting reading culture among secondary school students in Rivers State’ will guide the interpretation of the findings.

Availability of information resources and students’ reading habit

From the data analysis presented, the result shows that there is a positive and moderate relationship between the availability of information resources and students’ reading habit. Hypothesis moved that the relationship is significant. This implies that availability of information resources in the school libraries can influence the reading habit of secondary school students. There is need to provide adequate and variety information resources in the school libraries so that students will be attracted to the library, thus, stimulate their reading habit. Supporting this view, Akanwa (2002) remarks that information resources play a great role in children’s lives because their academic advancement is greatly dependent on them. School libraries encourage readers in the good use of their leisure hours by providing them with light reading materials such as fiction, periodicals and newspapers. The finding also agrees with Akpochafo (2003) who opines that the teaching and learning of students at the secondary school level, require diverse human and information resources. Availability of information resources will assist in improving and increasing the reading skills and learning habits of students. The resources encompasses all persons and things that are capable, in one way or the other, of conveying information, values, processes, experiences and techniques that can be used to actively engage ‘learners’ in the learning process.

Extent of utilization of school library

Research question two as analyzed revealed the extent of utilization of the school libraries. The result of the analysis for research question two indicated that most of the secondary
school students in Rivers state visit their school library periodically. This finding is in line with Moruf’s (2015) research finding which states that school libraries are not properly utilized because of inadequate provision of library resources and non-exposure of students by teachers to use of library materials for assignments and other class work that will improve or arouse their interest in using the library. Another factor that causes infrequent use of the library by students is school library regulations. In support of this view, Burke (1996) states that the use of school libraries are restricted by mainly the time of use and the effects of regulations on use respectively. Thus the most common time for students to use school libraries are only within school session hours or class visits, and such time is fixed. Some library regulations also restricts use for example, the time to use the library, the number of students that can be accommodated at the same time and loan restriction.

Owate and Okpa (2013) also confirmed that students use school libraries only during school hours. School authorities also promote the use of libraries but do not properly plan for who will man the libraries even after school hours because there were neither librarians nor library attendance to take of the students’ information needs.

**Utilization of school library and students’ reading habit**

It was found that there is a positive low relationship but which is significant between the students’ utilization of school libraries and their reading habit. This invariably means that the utilization of the school library can influence the reading habit of the students. This finding is in consonance with Philip (2009) who observed that there is a link between school libraries and literacy, the students should be provided with relevant, rich and up-to-date materials, with an inviting library environment and sympathetic staff, to help them in knowledge acquisition. Once a student has developed the reading culture, such students will always come back to the library to look for more books. Surendran (2014) also revealed that school library should be located in an
area of maximum accessibility to the students and the teachers. It should have good ventilation and ample area to conduct other activities, this is to achieve maximum.

Similarly, the finding is in consonance with Fabunmi and Fobrunso’s (2010) research report. The researchers found that Nigerian secondary school students do not have a healthy reading habit due to the fact that their school library are not adequately stocked to satisfy the information needs of the students, as well as improving their reading culture. The researchers suggested that for these schools to achieve their purpose towards inculcating reading habit in students, they should have school libraries with adequate information resources that will enhance their reading culture as well as employing professional librarians to guide the students in their use of the library.

**Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, the researcher concludes as follows: there is a positive relationship between availability of information resources and students’ reading habit, the secondary school students visit the library periodically, there is a positive relationship between utilization of school library and students reading habit, school libraries faced various challenges which has affected the students reading habit, there is a significant relationship between availability of information resources and students’ reading habits and there is a significant relationship between utilization of school library and students’ reading habit.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations which are believed will improve reading culture among students if implemented. They are:
1. Adequate information resources – both book and non-book information resources should be made available in the school libraries in order to influence the reading habit of the students. If children imbibe the habit of reading papers and other pleasurable materials in their early stages in life, they will continue in future and forming a good reading habit since it is not exam-based.

2. Students should be given priority attention for effective utilization of school library resources. Students should be encouraged to use the library not only during the official time, but whenever they have need for it.

3. Conducive environment can enhance students’ patronage to the library. The library building should be specious, well ventilated and attractive so as to attract the students’ use of the library as well as influencing their reading habit.

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