

Full Length Research Paper

The use of libraries among children in primary schools in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria

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This study investigated the use of libraries among primary school children in the public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis. Using a survey design method and structured questionnaire, data were collected from a total of 366 participants. The findings showed that generally, there was a high level of reading interest and proficiencies among the children which are good indicators of use of library resources; but a low level of volume of books read, which indicates low level of library use. The test of the three research hypotheses, revealed that (i) There was insignificant difference in interest in reading among the children based on the type of school they came from ($f(2,358)=8.6.7,pc.01$). (ii) There was no significant difference in reading proficiency among children from the public, private, or missionary schools ($f(2,352)=0.99,p>.05$) and (iii) There was significant difference in the volume/extend of reading materials among the children from the three categories of schools investigated. It was discussed and concluded that although the children reported high interest and proficiencies in reading, their low volume of reading materials indicates low use of library. It was recommended that the government and private schools should provide and encourage children to use the library frequently.

Key words: Interest, proficiency, use of library, reading, education.

INTRODUCTION

It is a common saying that children are the leaders of tomorrow. This is because children are the foundation and hope of a future generation and they ensure the survival and continuity of the human species on earth. Furthermore, the transition of leadership from an average population to the next generation depends on children. With the coming of civilization made possible and enduring through the invention of the symbols of writing for documenting human thought which constitutes the vehicle for invention, arts, science and technology, it is important that societies prepare children for leadership

task by equipping them with the ability to read and write. Reading is recognised as an art capable of transforming man's life and his entire society (Busayo, 2011). It is a very important issue which is not only about enjoyment but a necessity and basic tool of education (Makotsi, 2005). It is further contended that reading makes way for a better understanding of one's own experiences and it can be an exciting voyage to self discovery. It is the art of interpreting printed and written words, the most effective process of conscious learning which influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as the altitudes,

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morals, beliefs, judgement and action of readers.

Reading therefore plays a foundation role and is the pivot and anchor of the education of the child. It is a recognized fact that reading has a crucial role to play in creating independent learners, literacy promotion, and educational attainment of individuals in every society of the world. Adeniji (2006) support this view point, observing that reading especially the effective type is the bedrock to a learner's success whether in the primary, secondary or tertiary level of education. In tandem with this view, Obanya (2002) extensively discussed the paramount role reading plays in children's educational pursuit and submitted that it promotes a deep awareness and builds the child up emotionally and intellectually. This is even so when reading is voluntarily undertaking helping to enhance students' achievement. Reading as a leisure activity is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary, and reading speed of students.

Education plays prominent roles in the leadership and the well being of any nation that wants to sustain its prominence on the global scene (Usoro and Usanga, 2007). In fact it is the engine room of development of any nation culturally, scientifically and technologically. This is more so as education not only liberates, but as a vital tool for development that allows meaningful contribution to society. Functional education for children needs books as "books are the most suitable medium through which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation (Busayo, 2011:2). Makotsi (2005) emphasised that children (and adults) need access to a wide range of reading materials to help them acquire and maintain fluent reading skills, broaden horizons, and think independently and critically. He surmised further that improving access to relevant information and promoting a reading culture are prerequisite for strengthening literacy skills, widening education and learning opportunity and helping people to address the causes of poverty. The library as the storehouse of books and other reading materials is therefore the bridge between school children and functional education in Nigeria. This could be a public library or better still a school library. In this regard, Adeniji (2006) sees the school library as the heart and soul, as it impacts all categories of learners from the slowest learners in the kindergarten to the most intelligent senior in the higher schools through the provision of print and non- print materials to aid learning.

Statement of the problem

There is a general outcry in the Nigerian society of the wanton reading habits, especially among children and young people. This is made worse by the fact that mass media through electronic means daily update the Nigerian child with information through the cable televisions, cell phone, the World Wide Web or the internet so much that children have lost interest in reading

The result in fact is poor reading habits and the attendant poor performance/achievement in their educational pursuits. This study therefore intends to investigate the use of library facilities among children in the primary schools in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

- i. To assess the level of interest in reading among the children in the public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis.
- ii. To investigate the proficiency of reading among children from the public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis.
- iii. To compare the extent of reading among the public, private and missionary schools children
- iv. To identify the reason children engage in reading.
- v. To find out the extent of encouragement the school and the family give to children to read.

Research hypotheses

Three research hypotheses were postulated and tested in this work.

HO1: There is no significant difference in the influence of reading among children in public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

HO2: There is no significant difference in the reading proficiency of children in public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

HO3: There is no significant difference in the extent of reading materials among children in the public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading habit or interest constitutes an important foundation to the use of library resources. It is Particularly important for children because as Alegbeleye (2010) reveals, it is best formed at a young impressionable age in school and once formed, it can last one's life time. Sangkaeo (1999) refers to reading habit as the behaviour which expresses the likeness (interest) of reading of individual types of reading and taste for reading. Self interest for reading is considered important for children as it is believed that reading children become reading adults. It has been found that frequent reading is related to the development of sophisticated language structures, higher level of comprehension, improved word analysis, skills and fluency in significant amount of voluntary reading, and that these are associated with a greater interest and skill development (Arriving International reading Association, 2002). This view supports the finding of Pilgreen and Krashen (1993) that the longer free reading is practiced the more consistent and positive the result,

and that people who read more write better. Krasher surmised that reading as a leisure activity is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary and reading speed of students. Udoh-Ilomechine (2008) found the role of the library in laying the foundation for children's interest in reading, reading habit and interest in critical reading. In her study, *the significance of school libraries in the educational development of student*, it was found out that 42%(n=84) of the respondents indicated that the school library plays a very important role in the development of students' reading habit. 33%(n=640) correspondent were undecided with only 25% (n=50) disagreeing. These studies show the relevance of children's interest in voluntary reading as a foundation for success in terms of present and future achievements. On children's proficiency vis-à-vis the role of the library, literature generally lends support to the importance of the role of library in achieving this important task; for instance, a wide range of review, "Every Child Ready to Read" (2010) surmised that there is a clear and abundant evidence that certain physical design feature in environment (represented adequately by the library) supports young children's literacy engagement and subsequent achievement. They include physical design features, use of space and resource may help to focus and sustain children's literacy activity providing greater opportunity to engage in language and literacy behaviours. This research indicates that a more deliberate approach to selection and arrangement of materials according to specific design critical (as libraries do) may enhance children to use library's object and related print resource, thereby enhancing the children's reading proficiency.

With regard to the extent of reading or volume of resource materials children utilized in or out of library setting, a growing body of evidence tends to suggest that a supportive learning environment in which children have access to a wide variety of reading and writing resource such as the library is imperative (Every Child Ready to Read, 2010). In line with this view, Simisanye and Quadri (undated) assert that public libraries have been working intensively to accumulate and promote reading programme for children by organising summer reading programmes in Nigeria. Similarly, Busayo (2011) has surmised that proximity of the school library to pupils and children in primary and secondary schools respectively enhance the extent to which children's use of library resources by the sheer volume of available literacy resources.

It has also been found that a number of factors serve as motivator for children's interest in reading and enhance the use of library resource. These include the home environment as represented by parents (Dent and Yannot, 2005 as reported in Busayo, 2011; Every Child Ready to Read, 2010) as well as the public and school libraries (Usoro and Usanga, 2007; Udoh-Ilomechine, 2008; Every Child Ready to Read, 2010; Busayo, 2011).

The summary of the review reveals that children's interest in the use of library can be promoted by the public/schools themselves through provision and arrangement of relevant reading materials in a quiet and attractive environment. This will enhance children's interest and proficiency in reading. The extent to which children use these resources can be enhanced through the library planned promotion activities such as the summer reading programme for children, reading competitions and celebration of yearly library week to sensitize the children of library facilities and resources as well as public awareness creation on new arrivals and anything that is new in the library by librarians. Parents can also serve as motivators for library use by being personal examples and encouragement for their children.

METHOD, MEASURES, AND PROCEEDURE

Design: The descriptive survey design was employed for this study. Descriptive surveys are those studies which aim at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristic features or facts about a given population. This study aims at obtaining data on use of library among children in primary school in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State – Nigeria.

Participant: A total of 336 participants took part in the study and they were all pupils of primary class six. They were drawn from three primary Schools in Makurdi metropolis. 122 participants, representing 33.3% were drawn from each one of the public schools and one each from missionary schools and private schools. A self-developed validated questionnaire tagged "use of library questionnaire (ULQ) was employed for data collection. It consists of 35 items. The internal consistency of the questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of .70 cronbach's alpha.

The questionnaires were administered to the pupils during school hours. Permission was first obtained from the headmasters of the schools, who then introduced the researcher to the class teachers of the selected classes (i.e. class six). Participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that no punishment will be given to any of them for refusal to participate. Questionnaires were collected from them on the spot after completion. The data were then collated and analysed. One-way analysis of variance statistic was used to answer the study hypotheses. Frequencies, percentages, as well as means and standard deviations were used to interpret the data.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Description of the three main variables of the study, i.e. Children's interest in the use of library, proficiency in library use and extent of reading materials among the three types of schools are presented in Tables 1-3.

The result from Table 1 indicates that missionary primary school has the highest mean interest (3.57, SD.59) in reading followed by public primary schools. The private schools came last on this variable.

The result from Table 2 reveals that pupils from the missionary schools have the highest proficiency in reading ($m = 3.04$, $SD = .71$), followed by those in the

Table 1. Pupils interest in reading in the type of school.

Type of school	No	Mean	Standard deviation
Public pri. school	117	3.50	.96
Private pri. school.	122	3.16	.87
Missionary pri. School	122	3.57	.59
Total	361	3.40	.84

Table 2. Pupils' proficiency in reading according to type of school.

Type of school	No	Mean	Standard deviation
Public pri. School	112	2.99	.83
Private pri. School.	121	2.90	.82
Missionary pri. School.	122	3.04	.71
Total.	355	2.98	.79

Table 3. Extent of reading materials, by the types of school.

Type of school	No	Mean	Standard deviation
Public pri. School.	121	1.90	1.08
Private pri. School.	122	1.56	0.87
Missionary pri. School.	121	1.70	0.81
Total	364	1.72	0.94

Table 4. One way of analysis of variance showing differences in interest in reading among primary school children based on the type of School.

Source	Sum of square	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	%
Between group	1 11.69	2	5.84	8.67	.01
Within group	241.26	358	0.67		
Total	252.95	360			

public primary schools. Those in the private primary schools have the lowest mean proficiency in reading ($m = 2.90$, $SD = .82$).

The result from Table 3 indicates that pupils from the public primary schools have the highest mean score on extent of reading materials. Pupils from missionary schools came next while those in private school came last. It can be observed that on the three aspects of reading pupils from missionary schools score the highest in interest and Proficiency, and second highest on the extent of reading materials. They were closely followed in second position by those from the public schools in that order except on the extent of reading materials where they came top.

Test of hypotheses

HO1: there is no significant difference in the interests in

reading among children in public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

The result from Table 4 indicates that there is a significant difference in interest in reading among children in public, private and missionary schools ($F(2,358) = 8.67$, $P < .01$). On the basis of this finding, the null hypothesis was rejected. The alternate hypothesis was confirmed.

HO2: there is no significant difference in the reading proficiency of children from the public, private and missionary primary schools in Makurdi metropolis. This hypothesis was tested using the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result is presented in Table 5.

The result from Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the reading proficiency of children from public, private and missionary primary schools in Makurdi metropolis ($F(2,352) = 0.99$, $p > .05$). Based on this finding, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 5. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing difference in reading proficiency among children from the public school, private and missionary primary school in Makurdi metropolis.

Source	Sum of square	Degree of Freedom	Mean square	F	%
Between Groups	1.22	2	0.61	0.99	.37
Within groups	218.60	352	0.62		
Total	219.82	354			

Table 6. One-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) showing differences in extent of reading materials among children from the public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

Source	Sum of square	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	%
Between Groups	7.22	2	3.61	4.20	.02
Within Groups	310.20	361	0.86		
Total	317.42	363			

Table 7. Children's interest in reading.

Response	F	%
Not at all	16	4.4
A bit	35	9.6
Quite alot	97	26.5
Very much	213	58.2
No response	5	1.4
Total	366	100.0

Table 8. Extent of children's proficiency in reading.

Response	F	%
Not at all	12	3.3
Quite a bit	78	21.3
Very well	171	46.7
Excellently well	94	25.7
No response	11	3.0
Total	366	100.0

HO3: there is no significant difference in the extent of reading materials among public, private and missionary primary schools in Makurdi metropolis. This hypothesis was tested using the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result is presented in Table 6.

The result from Table 6 indicates that there is a significant difference in the extent of reading materials among children from the public, private and missionary primary schools in Makurdi metropolis ($F(2,361) = 4.20, P < .05$). Based on this finding, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted.

It can be observed from Table 7 that 26.5% (n=97) of participant reported having quite a lot of interest in

reading and 58.2% (n=213) reported having very much interest in reading. Only 4.4%(n=16) and 9.6 % (n=35) reported no interest at all and only a bit of interest. Taken together, the result shows that majority of children amounting to 84.7% reported enjoying reading.

The result from Table 8 indicates that 25.7% (n=94) of the children reported excellent proficiency in reading and 46.7% (n=171) reported "very well" proficiency level in reading. However, 24.6 % (n=90) reported poor reading proficiency. Majority of the children amounting to 72.4% reported high proficiency in reading.

The result from Table 9 reveals that 53.6 % (n = 196) of the children read only 1-3 books in a week. Similarly, 27.9% (n =102) reported reading 4-6 books in a week. This result shows that the volume of reading is low, with over 80% reading only between 1-6 books in a week.

Research QIV

Reasons children engage in reading among primary school pupils in Makurdi metropolis. The result to this research question is presented in Table 10.

The result from Table 10 shows that the ten reasons why children engage in reading among the top three are "to do school homework and pass their examinations" (20.20%) to help them understand the world (16.70%). The second top three are for fun (13.70%) "it is a skill for life" (11.20% and "to help me get a job" (8.20%).

Research question 5: to find out the extent of encouragement children receive from (a) School and (b) The family to read.

The results to this question are presented in Table 11a and 11b.

The result from Table 11a shows that only 21.0%(n=77) of the pupils indicate that they receive encouragement

Table 9. Children's extent/volume of reading in a week.

Extent /volume of reading in no of b book	F	%
1-3 book	196	53.6
4-6	102	27.9
6-8	38	10.4
8-10	28	7.7
No response	2	0.5
Total	366	100.0

Table 10. Reasons children engage in reading in primary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

Reasons	F	%
To do home work/pass exams	74	20.20
Help me understand the world	61	16.70
For fun	50	13.70
It is a skill for life	41	11.20
Help me get a job	30	8.20
Teach me about other people	29	7.90
Give me a break	11	3.00
Help me understand myself	10	13.70
Help me find what I want	53	14.50
No response	7	1.90
Total	366	100.0

Table 11a. 'My school encourages me to read'.

Response	F	%
Yes	977	21.00
No	289	79.00
Total	366	100.0

Table 11b. 'My family encourages me to read'.

Response	F	%
Yes	99	27.0
No	267	73.0
Total	366	100.0

from their school to read. Majority comprising 79% (n =289) indicate they receive no encouragement from their school to read.

The result from Table 11b shows that 27%(n=99) indicate that they receive encouragement from their family to read. However majority of pupils comprising 73%(n=267) indicated they receive no encouragement from their family to read.

DISCUSSION

This study surveyed the use of library among children in primary schools in Makurdi metropolis. Three hypothesis and additional two regards questions were investigated. The result of hypothesis 1 revealed a significant difference

in children's interest in reading among those in public, private and missionary schools. Specifically, children from the missionary primary schools had a higher mean score (m=3.57,SD=.59) compared to those from public (m=3.59,SD=.96) and private schools (m=3.16,SD=.87) respectively.

Since interest in reading is a good indicator for the use of library, the implication of this finding is that children who attend missionary schools are more likely to use library resource compared to their counterparts in private and public primary schools. It could also be an indication of availability of school library resource/facilities in missionary schools more than the other type of schools. If this second case scenario holds true then this finding is in line with the position held by other scholars that the school library plays a vital role in developing reading

(habits) interest in children (Simisanye and Quadri, (undated); Udoh-Llomechine, 2008; Busayo, 2011). The second hypothesis did not find any significant difference in reading proficiency among the children from the public, private and missionary primary school pupils. Mean score however indicated marginal superior proficiency in children from the missionary schools followed by those from the public schools and least from the private schools.

The low proficiency indicates the general outcry about the dropping reading habits of the Nigerian child in recent time as documented by several scholars (Mokatsi, 2005; Sangkaeo 1999). This leads to low proficiency in reading across children irrespective of which type of school they attend. Low proficiency in reading also indicates low use of library because studies have linked frequent library use with improved literacy level and skills (Every Child Ready to Read, 2010; Alegbeleye, 2010; Busayo, 2011).

The third hypothesis confirmed a significant difference in the extent of reading materials among the children from the public, private and missionary schools in Makurdi metropolis. Children from the public primary schools reported the highest volume of books read; followed by the children in the missionary schools, and lastly the private primary schools. This trend may reflect the fact that students from the public schools founded by the government have greater access to reading materials since school libraries are contained in a national policy on education by the national government (NPE, 1993; Obonya, 2002).

On children's reasons for reading, the study found that reading to do school assignment or to pass exams, to understand the world around them, to help them find what they want as well as for fun constitute the major four reasons for their action.

The findings imply that children's reading and by extension, use of the library is purely for school academic purposes. While this reason is paramount and useful, it might restrict their scope of reading and hence, extend of use of the libraries vast range of resources.

It was also found that both the school and family did not contribute significantly to the development of children's reading habits and by extension use of the library. This may be due to the lack of library facilities in the schools or that families engage their children/wards in other chores at home after school instead of engaging them in reading at home or taking them to a nearby public library. It could also be that parents do not make provision for reading books for the children at home.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of this study revealed that although there is a high percentage of interest of reading and by extension use of the library, there was a significant difference in interest among children from the public, private and missionary primary schools. Similarly the children repor-

ted high proficiency in reading skills. It means that they can use the library resource well if exposed to or encouraged to do so. It is concluded that the amount of reading by the children was generally low although significant difference exists among children from the three types of schools, that is, public, private and missionary schools. Furthermore, children use the library mainly for academic purpose and less so for self discovering and fun. Furthermore, the schools and families do not give adequate encouragement to children to use the library. It is therefore recommended that the government (federal, state and local) should build and equipped children's library centers in all tertiary institutions, city centers and strategic locations to avail it to the children and get them acquainted with the resources and facilities provided by the library for their use. Also, parents should encourage use of the library in children by introducing the children early to library use, library visitation even as a recreation center rather than other social play centers. The parents can also do well by being good readers at home so that the children can take a cue from them.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests

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Serial Division, University Library,
Benue State University, Makurdi.
Dec. 2013.

Dear Respondent,

Request to complete attached questionnaire on utilization of Library resources as tool for improving the reading habits of children: A case study of selected primary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

I am a staff of the above named university currently carrying out a research on the above topic.

Kindly fill the attached questionnaire as objectively as possible as it will contribute immensely to the successful completion of this study. Information provided will be used in strict confidence and for the purpose it is intended for.

Yours faithfully,

DoosuurAshaver
(Researcher)

Tick only one option for question 1 -3

1. To what extent do you enjoy reading?
(a) Very much (b) Quite a lot
(c) A bit (d) Not at all
2. To what extent can you read proficiently?
(a) Excellent well (b) Very well
(c) Quite a bit (d) Not at all
3. How many books do you read in a week?
(a) 1 - 3 (b) 4 - 6
(c) 6 - 8 (d) 8 -10

Tick as many as applicable for questions 4 – 9

4. Do you have access to the following educational resources?
(a) A computer (b) Desk of your own
(c) Books papers (d) News papers
(e) Magazine
5. Why do you read? (More than one options allowed if applicable)
(a) It's a skill for life [] (b) Helps me find what I want (c) It's fund []
(d) Help me get a job [] (d) Help me understand the world (f) Teaches me about other people
[] (g) Gives me a break (h) Help me Understand myself [] (i) To do my school home
work/passing exams []
6. I would read more if ...
I had more time []
I enjoyed it more []
Books were cheaper []
Subjects are interesting []
Books had more pictures []
Libraries were better []
My school encouraged me []
My family encouraged me []
If there were more books around me []
If someone read aloud to me []
7. Which activity incentives would motivate you and others read more?
Reading games []

- Helping children []
- Prize/competition []
- Reading group []
- Talking about book []
- Writing book reviews []
- Rating books []
- Library display []
- Reading aloud []
- Free voluntary reading []

8. Who do you read with?

- Mother []
- Father []
- Teacher []
- Sibling []
- Friend []
- Librarian []

9. Who do you talk about your reading with?

- Mother []
- Father []
- Teacher []
- Sibling []
- Friend []
- Librarian []
- Others []