



# IJRM

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An Official Publication of Human Journals




Human Journals

Vol.:2, Issue:1


Research Article

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## Influence of Parents' Educational and Socio-Economic Status on Reading Habits of Students in Selected Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria



**IJRM**  
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY  
An Official Publication of Human Journals



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**Keywords:** Influence of Parents' Educational, Socio-Economic Status, Reading Habits, Students in Selected Secondary Schools, Rivers State, Nigeria

### ABSTRACT

The study examined the reading habits of students in selected secondary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised to guide this study. A descriptive survey design was employed through a simple random sampling technique in obtaining data from a sample of 100 students and 100 parents/teachers from seven (7) local government areas of Rivers State. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the Pearson product moment correlation statistics was used in testing the hypotheses. Results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the educational level of parents and the socio-economic status of parents on the reading habits of the students ( $r=0.996 > 0.195$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Based on these findings, recommendations were made that parents and guardians should provide the texts needed by the students, parents and guardians should encourage their children to read respective of their educational status and reading competitions should be promoted in schools.



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## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental activity that is essential to life. A society that is devoid of a reading habit could be regarded as a slothful society. Reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. We usually read with our eyes while the brain converts them into words, which thereafter communicates things to us. Reading can be done silently (in our heads) or aloud so that other people can hear. Reading is a receptive skill through which we receive information. Reading also helps in the pronunciation of words. According to Harmer, cited in Tennant (2012), reading is useful for language acquisition this implies that language development occurs when the individual cultivates the habit of reading. Reading involves predicting, thinking and questioning. Habit is a thing done often and hence, easily. Reading becomes a habit when it is done frequently Wagner, cited in Chettri and Rout (2013) posit that reading habit is considered in terms of the number of materials being read, the frequency of reading and the average time period on reading. Reading habit is an important tool for personality, mental and social development.

According to the Random House Unabridged Dictionary (2011), education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring several knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life). Kosemani (2002) sees education as a social institution merited by man to satisfy societal needs. It is also seen as the transmission of culture or values from one generation to another. Okolo (2009) defined education as a vehicle for social change and unavoidable means of physical, social, economic, political, religious and moral development for lifelong learning and survival. Education is, therefore, a social creation, designed to meet the specific needs of the society at any particular point in time. Formal education is also generally programmed on a sequence, the successful completion of one level leads to the next higher level. A good formal education ensures enlightenment for the citizens of any nation. It generally provides the basis for classify the country as either developed or otherwise. Informal education is a diffused, non-programmed process. Reading is important for everybody because one needs to cope with new knowledge in a changing world. Non-formal education involves the acquisition of skills, agricultural extension services and non-formal programmers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The reading habit of students can be affected by the level of education acquired by their parents and guardians. Students are no longer reading and are becoming deformed. Students whose parents/guardians are not well educated usually find it difficult to read because such parents may not know the importance of reading. The increase in the level of poverty as a result of the socio-economic status of the parents also affects the reading habit of the students. Some parents are so impoverished that they may not be able to afford the texts needed by their children. Since there is a high level of unemployment and underemployment in the Nigerian society where people can barely feed themselves, they will prefer to buy food items and other material items rather than books. The problem of the study is to ascertain the extent to which the educational level and socio-economic status of parents can influence the reading habit of students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the Reading habits of students in selected secondary schools in Rivers State. But specifically, the objectives are as follows;

1. To ascertain the extent to which the level of education of the parents can affect the reading habit of the students.
2. To ascertain the extent to which the socio-economic status of parents can affect the reading habit of students.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study;

1. To what extent can the level of parental education influence the reading habit of the students?
2. To what extent does the socio-economic status of parents influence the reading habit of the students?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null research hypotheses would be tested in the course of this study;

1. There is no significant relationship between the level of education of the parents and the reading habits of the students.
2. There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic status of the parents and the reading habit of the students.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study if implemented will be significant in the following ways;

1. It will help the parents to encourage the students to read irrespective of their educational level.
2. It will also encourage the government and other educational stakeholders to provide the reading materials/texts for the students since many parents are not buoyant enough to provide them.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

#### **Importance of Reading and Writing to Education**

Morehouse (2017) posits that the four language skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. This implies that reading is a language skill that is passive in nature. It requires the use of the eyes and brains to comprehend the written equivalent of spoken language. Reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once it is formed, it can last for one's lifetime (Green), cited in Owusu – Acheaw and Larson (2014). Learning which starts right from birth entails acquiring knowledge about various phenomena and understanding them. The more one reads, the more he learns. Reading fires the imagination of the child. It encourages quick learning and widens his views, expand horizons and helps him learn about different people and places. It encourages imagination and curiosity. En Espanol (2012) posits that reading and writing are important to help function in the reading and writing are important to help function in the school, on the job and in the society. In school, children with communication disorders are more likely to struggle with literacy skills.

#### **Reading and Parental Educational Level**

National research council (1998) posits that a recent research into human brain development has proved that parents are truly the children's first teachers. What parents do, or don't do,

has a lasting impact on their child's reading and literacy skills. For instance, there is considerable evidence of a relationship between reading regularly to a child and that child's later reading achievement. Children who learn from parents that reading is fun may be more likely to sustain efforts to learn to read when the going gets tough. This implies that reading should be made interesting to the children so that their habit of reading would improve. According to the UNICEF (2005) in Akindele (2012), young children are in their most important development stage of life. What they learn now and what happens to them now will influence them for the rest of their lives. The early years of the child are the most determinant of the child's psychosocial and cognitive development.

Gayle in Akindele (2012) is of the opinion that parents who introduce their pre-school aged children to books and read to them on a daily basis leads to greater reading knowledge and it links them to school readiness in later years. The earlier the parents get involved in the reading habit of their children, the more frequently the child is encouraged to read even until the adolescent and adult stages. Education is the best legacy that parents can give to their children. This legacy can be sustained if the children develop the habit of reading at an early age. Parents are encouraged not to be too busy in getting involved in the academic matters of their children.

Epstein, cited in Masha (2017), formulated a six dimensional model of family involvement in the life of the child that could help to focus and tighten the definition of parent's involvement. The model covers parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. It emphasizes the need to encourage and direct all parents to co-operate with their children. Parents' involvement in the children's learning enhances their academic performance and intellectual capabilities. According to Myrberg and Rosen in Chen and Ko (2011), the path analysis revealed that in addition to the direct effect of parental education on reading attainment on the average, well-educated parents do not only have more books at home than the less educated parents, they also use their knowledge of books to create a conducive reading environment for their children.

Chen and Ko (2009) posit that parental educational level is the best predictor for Taiwanese students reading attainment through regression analysis with PIRLS 2006. With regards to the relationships between other family factors and students' reading attainment, Chen and Ko (2009) discovered that early literacy skills and the number of books at home are the most important predictors of Taiwanese fourth graders. Okantey, cited in Chen and Ko (2011)

posits that parents' level of education is important in predicting children's academic performance. Educated parents are more likely to encourage their children to read and assist them with their assignments. Padberg in Chen and Ko (2011) also posits that parents' educational background has a positive effect on students' academic performance. Parents with a good educational background would ensure that their children perform well academically.

### **Reading and Socio-Economic Status**

According to Ezewu in Aminigo (2009), Socio-Economic Status refers to the social and economic positions of an individual or a family in any given society. A student whose parents are not economically buoyant or that comes from a low socio-economic status finds it difficult to purchase the needed texts, which could affect his reading habit. A high level of poverty affects the purchasing power of the average Nigerian. He would prefer to use his money to buy items that he feels would be more useful to him than books. The low socio-economic status of parents could also result in the delay in language and reading development of the students, irregular attendance at school, which leads to non-completion of assignments and the inability to study for tests and examinations. Some students even reside in crowded houses which makes it difficult for them to read.

Bas in Aramide (2011) posits that there is a significant difference between the reading attitudes of students and their parents occupation. The socio-economic status of parents could affect the reading habits of the students in the sense that economically buoyant parents are able to meet the financial and materials needs of their children. Keles cited in Aramide (2011) also discovered that the financial income level of families differed significantly in terms of attitudes of students towards reading. Hanafi cited in Amuda (2016) posits that parents' level of education and reading materials available in the home were related to children's academic achievement.

Owoeye in Amuda (2016) also investigated the influence of parents' level of education in children's academic pursuit. The results indicated that parents' level of education has significant effect on the children's academic pursuit. Parents' educational level serves as a form of motivation to the children to work hard and excel. Omoegun and Oni in Aramide (2011) have also revealed that the attitudes of high school students towards reading differed significantly in relation to their parents' educational level in favour of students whose parents

were graduates. The results obtained in the research were to the disadvantage of students whose parents were illiterates.

According to Conger and Donnellan in Cheng (2017), parents' with higher socioeconomic status compared to lower socioeconomic status parents, tend to make greater materials and interpersonal investments in children's development. Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman in APA (2018) argued that children from low socio-economic status families are less likely to have experiences that encourage the development of fundamental skills of reading acquisition, such as phonological awareness, vocabulary and oral language.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is a descriptive survey research, aimed at investigating the reading habit of the Students in some selected Secondary Schools in Rivers State. From the population, random sampling technique was used to sample a total number of 200 questionnaires administered to 100 students and 100 parents/teachers from the three (3) senatorial districts. The questionnaire consists of the two (2) sections. The first section consists of the personal data of the respondents while the second section consists of the ten (10) specific terms of questions and choice answers. A 4-point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA =4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2) and Strongly Disagree (SD=1) was applied to the structured questions. The reliability method adopted was the test-retest method of reliability. The mean of the questionnaire items is 2.50. The mean score, standard deviation and decision rule were used to analyze the research questions, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics was used to analyze the hypotheses at  $r < 0.05$  level of significance with appropriate degrees of freedom.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT**

**Research Question 1: To what extent can the level of education of the parents influence the reading habit of students?**

Items 1-5 provided the answer to the research question as shown in Table one.

**Table 1. Mean responses on the influence of parent’s educational status on student’s reading habit**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean $\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	The educational level of parents could affect the reading habit of students.	3.07	1.01	Upheld
2.	Parents that are educated often encourage their children to read.	3.60	0.84	Upheld
3.	Uneducated parents are less concerned about the reading habits of their children.	2.39	1.07	Rejected
4.	Some students have a food reading habit despite the educational level of their parents.	3.52	0.82	Upheld
5.	Educated parents are more concerned about the reading habits of their children than uneducated parents.	2.99	1.08	Upheld
Grand Mean $\bar{x}$		3.11		Upheld

Table 1 shows that high mean scores of 3.07, 3.60, 3.52 and 2.99 were obtained for items 1, 2, 4 and 5 and a low mean score of 2.39 was obtained for item 3. The grand mean of 3.11 was also obtained. From the above table, it could equally be observed that most of the ratings including the grand mean were above the cut-off point of 2.50 and upheld, indicating that the educational level of parents could influence the reading habits of the students.

**Research Question 2: To what extent does the socio-economic status of parents influence the reading habit of the students?**

Items 6-10 provided the answer to the research question as shown in Table one.



**Table 2: Mean responses on the socio-economic status of parents and the reading habit of the students**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Standard Deviation	Decision
6.	Poverty could affect the reading habits of students	3.04	0.95	Upheld
7.	If parents are not able to purchase the books needed by the students, it could affect their reading habit.	3.36	0.84	Upheld
8.	Some parents prefer to buy clothes, shoes and other material items for their children rather than books.	2.81	0.96	Upheld
9.	The low socio-economic status of parents could lead to the delay in language and reading development of the students.	2.82	0.96	Upheld
10.	Irregular attendance at school as a result of the low socio-economic status of parents could affect the reading habit of students.	3.0	1.03	Upheld
Grand Mean $\bar{x}$		3.0		Upheld

Table 2: shows that high mean scores of 3.04, 3.36, 2.81, 2.82 and 3.0 were obtained for items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, and a grand mean of 3.0 was obtained. From the above table, it could equally be observed that all the ratings including the grand mean were above the cut-off point of 2.50 and upheld, indicating that the socio-economic status of parents could influence the reading habits of students.

### **Hypothesis One ( $H_{01}$ )**

There is no significant relationship between the level of education of parents and the reading habit of the students. The PPMC statistics is shown in Table 3:

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis of the relationship between the level of education of the parents and the reading habit of the students**

Variables	$\Sigma x$ , $\Sigma y$	$\Sigma x^2$ , $\Sigma y^2$	N	$\Sigma xy$	r	df	Alpha level	Critical r	Decision
Students	1,568	502,302	100	495,112	0.996	198	0.05	0.195	Reject
Parents/Teachers	1,649	491,653	100						Null hypothesis

Table 3 shows that the calculated r (0.996) is greater than the critical r (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance under 198 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the level of education of parents and the reading habits of the students is hereby rejected. This implies that the level of education of the parents could influence the ready habits of the students.

**Hypothesis Two (H<sub>02</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic status of the parents and the reading habit of the students. The PPMC statistics is shown in Table 4:

**Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis of the relationship between the socio-economic status of the parents and the reading habit of the students**

Variables	$\Sigma x$ , $\Sigma y$	$\Sigma x^2$ , $\Sigma y^2$	N	$\Sigma xy$	r	df	Alpha level	Critical r	Decision
Students	1,508	456,600	100	453,954	0.999	198	0.05	0.195	Reject
Parents/Teachers	1,649	491,653	100						null hypothesis

Table 4 shows that the calculated r (0.999) is greater than the critical r (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance under 198 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the reading habit of the students is hereby rejected. This implies that the socio-economic status of parents could influence the reading habits of the students.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

From the statistical analysis of hypothesis, the result reveals that there is a significant relationship between the educational level of parents and the reading habits of the students. This is in line with Myrberg and Rosen in Chen and Ko (2011), whose path analysis revealed that in addition to the direct effect of parental education on reading attainment on the average, well-educated parents do not only have more books at home than the less educated parents, they also use their knowledge of books to create a conducive reading environment for their children. Chen and Ko (2009) posit that parental educational level is the best predictor for students reading attainment.

The result of hypothesis 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the reading habit of the students. This is in line with Conger and Donnellan in Cheng (2017), who posited that parents' with higher socioeconomic status compared to lower socioeconomic status parents tend to make greater materials and interpersonal investments in children's development. This also implies that high socioeconomic status parents are able to provide the necessary reading materials and a conducive environment for their children. These resources would help to increase the reading habits of the students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The reading culture in Nigeria is at the verge of collapse. This has made it impossible for the nation to compete with other developed countries in terms of advancement. For the nation to succeed economically, socially, politically and technologically, we must build literate citizens that are capable of reading and writing. It is, therefore, necessary to make the present generation more aware of the benefits of reading.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The students should allocate a specific time for their personal reading in order to develop the habit of reading.
2. The government at all levels should enact positive policies that would benefit the educational sector.

3. Parents and guardians should ensure that books and other reading materials are adequately provided for the students.
4. Parents and guardians should encourage their children to read irrespective of their educational status.
5. The timetable committee in the schools should allocate a specific period for reading on the timetable, which should be supervised by the teachers.
6. Reading competitions should be promoted the schools.

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