

IMPACT OF ATTITUDE ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN READING COMPREHENSION IN KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the Impact of Attitude on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance in Reading Comprehension in Katsina State. The study has two research objectives, two research questions and tested two null hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and a simple multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 600 from a population of 22,911 200 level students of colleges of education in Katsina state. Two Instruments namely, Reading Attitudes Questionnaire (RATQ) adapted from Brown, Miller & Lewandowski 1999 and Reading Comprehension Performance Tests (RCPT) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated and the reliability was established after pilot study as .768 and .741, respectively. The hypotheses were tested at $P \leq 0.05$ levels of significance using Analysis of variance (ANOVA), and t-tests. The result shows that secondary school students' attitude to reading accounted for 0.05% of the total variance in comprehension performance ($R^2 = .005$, $P > 0.05$). Therefore, there is no significant influence of secondary school students' attitude to reading on their comprehension performance in Katsina state. Results further revealed that there is significant difference in the comprehension performance of male and female secondary school students (t -value = .460 & p -value = > 0.05). Results also indicated that respondents are statistically different in comprehension performance this implies that, there is significant in the comprehension performance of secondary school students in Katsina state based on class sections (Arts, Science & Commercial classes). Finally, some recommendations were made, which include, teachers should encourage recreational reading on the students.

Keywords: Attitude, Reading Comprehension, Academic Performance.

Introduction

Reading is a core competency at school, and all academic achievements depend to a greater extent on reading literacy. Reading is regarded as a fundamental skill necessary for personal learning and intellectual growth (Bozena, 2007). The ability to read refers to more than just being able to recognize letters and decode words; it includes the ability to construct meaning from the written word and familiarity with the various forms and functions of written texts (Pretorius & Machet, 2004). Ability to read is highly valued and it is important for personal, social and economic well-being. Reading is seen as a skill which forms the basis of literacy and civilization; it is through it that one attains a meaningful level of success in life because without reading ability, knowledge in all school subjects will not be attained from the primary to the university level (Sotiloye, Popoola & Michael, 2017).

Reading attitude depicts the system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation (Joey & Arland, 2016). Reading is an aspect of human

development and its use facilitates lifelong reading skills (Robert & Wilson 2006 in Joey & Arland, 2016). The ultimate success of instruction is strongly affected by the reader's attitude. Researchers have posited several theories that attitudes affect learner's motivation and subsequent achievement by increasing the amount of time in reading. However, Joey and Arland (2016) found that student's attitudes toward reading is getting little attention in the dire need to develop their wholesome literacy ability. The literacy development of students in Katsina State especially has not been made a priority as it should considering the place of functional literacy to the making of a contributory adult in the society.

Attitude to reading is viewed centrally from social psychological viewpoint which is usually either positive or negative disposition, feeling or action of individuals on other people or things in environment. Attitude on reading depicts the mindset beneath feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable. Lawal (2008) identified three types of students' attitude to reading which he described as intensive, literary, extensive reading behaviours. He submitted that most learners, particularly those at the secondary school levels have negative attitudes towards these reading. Majority of them focus on intensive reading which is carried out mainly for examination purpose. Hence, inferences from the submissions of these scholars are that the generality of learners and indeed, adults read, in most cases, for achievement of a desired objective—success in examination or job procurements. It can be seen from the foregoing literature that in spite of the key roles of reading to academic success, literacy skills cultivation and the ultimate desire of reading to learn from the secondary school level onward, there has not been serious attention on the attitude of the established poor attitude of secondary school student readers.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of academic performance of secondary school students in both internal and external examinations is a menace that every effort is geared towards finding implementable panacea to address. Experience of these researchers as teacher trainers, examiners and as justified in literatures have hinted as the prevailing unimpressive reading attitude of students as major source of the oft occurrence poor performance. Findings (Iliyas, 2011; WAEC, 2012) have established the influence of poor reading on academic performance. Olaofe (1997) found that the problem of students' academic underperformance is a problem of inadequate or poor reading culture. It is instructive to also note that as secondary school students are being prepared for the rigorous study at the tertiary level, every concerted effort has to be made to put these candidates in better stead of preparation through very positive reading attitude as antidote to failure. For a fact that there have not been studies on this lingering problem in Katsina state, this study, therefore, attempt to examine the attitude of the students to reading in relation to their performance in reading comprehension. This would be done with a view to seek strategies to improve the attitude of the students that when accomplished will definitely steer improved academic performance of the students generally across disciplines.

The success or failure of students is often attributed to the students' perception towards reading and reading habit. Unfortunately, many students are defective and lack abilities to read and comprehend what they read. These contribute to the persistent decline in the students' performance across school subjects. Students who cannot read cannot benefit from a formal education. Ability to read and comprehend is a skill that students need in order to be successful in their academic pursuit. Students' positive perceptions would assist them in developing good reading habits and good comprehending ability. In line with the above, the study, examines the attitude of secondary school students to reading comprehension and its impact on their academic performance in Katsina state.

Objectives of the Study:

The study is aimed at examining the impact of attitude on secondary school students' academic performance in reading comprehension in Katsina state. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Find out the difference in the male and female secondary school students' attitude to reading comprehension in Katsina state.
2. Investigate the attitude of secondary school students to reading comprehension based on disciplines (Arts, Science and Commercial classes) in Katsina state.

Research Questions

1. What is the difference in the male and female secondary school students' attitude to reading comprehension in Katsina state?
2. What is the attitude of secondary school students to reading comprehension based on disciplines (Arts, Science and Commercial classes) in Katsina state?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the male and female secondary school students' attitude to reading comprehension in Katsina state.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students to reading comprehension based on disciplines (Arts, Science and Commercial classes) in Katsina state.

Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population comprised all the public secondary schools in Katsina Central, while the target population was the SSS II students of the sampled schools. Four hundred (400) students were selected through the stratified random sampling technique from 28 co-educational schools in the four zonal education quality assurance offices in Katsina central senatorial zone of the state (Katsina, Rimi, Dutsin-Ma and Safana zonal education quality assurance). The two instruments used for the study were: Reading Attitudes Questionnaire (RATQ) on modified four-point Likert scale which contained

eighteen statements that measured the three types of attitudes towards reading behaviour. Positive attitudes were determined by a combination of responses from Strongly Agree and Agree while negative attitudes were determined by a combination of responses from Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The Reading Comprehension Performance Tests (RCPT) is made up of two comprehension passages. Each passage featured ten multiple choice questions that tested students' comprehension skills of the identified four skills. Three test items were set for each of the skills except the creative skill which had only one test item. The last three levels which are considered the most essential skills that respondents must acquire to perform well in reading task had the highest marks allotted to them. Respondents' performance level was based on the following criteria: high, average and low performance. Scores within the range of 24-34 were taken as high performance; 12-23, average performance; and 0-11, low performance.

The validated instruments had reliability co-efficient of 0.763 and 0.712 for RATQ and RCPT respectively. The instruments were administered to the subjects and the scores were collated and coded for analysis with the SPSS software package. Descriptive statistics (Percentages) were used to answer research questions while the null hypothesis was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic. The results are as shown in tables 1-3.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the difference in the male and female secondary school students' attitude to reading comprehension in Katsina state?

Table 1: Reading Attitudes of Secondary School Students

Reading Attitudes	Agree	Disagree
Intensive	541 (90.17%)	59 (9.83%)
Literary	407 (67.84%)	193 (32.16%)
Extensive	216 (36%)	384(64%)
General	378 (63%)	222 (37%)
Total	600 (100%)	600 (100%)

Table 1 shows that out of 600 students 541(90.17%) agreed that they engaged in intensive reading (reading for examination purposes). A total of 407(67.84%) students agreed that they read literary texts (also mainly for examination purposes) while 216 (36%) students agreed that they engaged in extensive reading (for [pleasure). Generally, a larger number of the students, (378 constituting 63%) agreed that they engaged in intensive reading. This implies that the students sampled had a negative attitude towards reading, particularly, extensive reading

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the male and female secondary school students' attitude to reading comprehension in Katsina state.

Table 2: t-test table of male and female secondary school students' attitude to reading

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal.	Sig. (p) t-value
Attitude to Reading	Male	370	43.9784	5.25187	598	.866	.387
	Female	230	43.5261	7.52560			

Table 2 presents the results of the independent samples t-test with calculated t-value of 0.866 ($t = 0.866$, $df = 598$, $p > 0.05$). Since the p-value of 0.387 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis two is accepted. This finding indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the in the male and female secondary school students' attitude to reading in Katsina Central, Nigeria. In other words, both male and female students exhibit similar attitudes towards reading.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school students to reading comprehension based on disciplines (Arts, Science and Commercial classes) in Katsina state.

Table 3: ANOVA table of respondents' attitude to reading based on class sections

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F- Value	Sig. F-value
Between Group	816.300	2	408.150		
Within Group	22359.885	597	37.454	10.897	.000
Total	23176.185	599			

Table 3 presents the results of the ANOVA analysis, which yielded an F-value of 10.897 ($F_{2, 597} = 0.753$, $p < 0.05$). Given that the p-value (.000) is below the 0.05 alpha level, null hypothesis two is rejected. This indicates a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of secondary school students towards reading comprehension in Katsina state based on disciplines. To further investigate the sources of these differences, Scheffe's Post Hoc analysis was conducted.

Table 4: Scheffe's Post Hoc Table on Respondents attitude to reading based on class sections

Class Section	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Commercial	109	41.3486	
Art	285		44.2140

Science	206		44.5388
Sig.		1.000	.887

Table 4 presents the results of Scheffe's Post Hoc analysis, which examined the attitudes of secondary school students towards reading in Katsina state, based on their discipline sections (Arts, Science, and Commercial). The analysis revealed a significant difference in attitudes among the three groups. Specifically, students in the Science class exhibited the highest attitude towards reading, with a mean score of 44.5388, followed by those in the Arts class (mean = 44.2140), and then those in the commercial class (mean = 41.3486). The finding suggests that Science students have a more positive attitude towards reading compared to their peers in Arts and Commercial classes. This finding could be attributed to various factors, such as: Science students might be more inclined towards reading due to the nature of their coursework, which often requires extensive reading and research; Science classes may foster a more analytical and curious mindset, leading to a greater interest in reading and the curriculum or teaching methods in Science classes might be more engaging, promoting a positive attitude towards reading.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that majority of the students sampled had negative attitudes towards reading. This finding implies that extensive reading attracted less positive attitudes from the students than intensive and literary reading. The finding is in line with the outcome of the studies of Unoh (1983), Emenyonu (1993), Omojuwa (1997) and Lawal (2008) who reported that most learners at the different levels of education in Nigeria particularly the secondary school have negative attitude towards reading. Learners' main focus is on intensive reading which is carried out essentially for academic purposes. This tendency is summed in what Unoh (1983) refers to as the "Reluctant Reading and Learning Syndrome" among Nigerians. That is their reading and learning is limited to what is specifically required for the achievement of their limited objectives such as success in examination or procurement of jobs. Also Lawal (2008) maintains that generally, the reading culture does not thrive in Nigeria and that the social institutions like the home (the first school of the child), school and the society do not encourage the reading attitude. The literature has revealed that learners' attitude to the three types of reading behaviour identified must be positive and balanced rather than being negative/ambivalent or lopsided. However as Lawal (2008) opines that an individual who lack the awareness of the values of reading cannot develop positive attitude to reading. In the same vein, Petscher (2010) and Seitz (2010) corroborate the assertion that learners' positive attitude to reading are highly critical sign for their high scores in reading comprehension performance.

The literature reviewed has emphasized that is crucial for learners at all levels of education to be adequately equipped with the latter two which are regarded as the higher order-reading skills and we are mostly required for academic development. Learners who fail to acquire them will have reading problems that a common feature in Nigerian secondary schools. It follows naturally that learners who have reading problems will avoid a reading task (that is engaging in any form of reading) which will enable them acquire rich vocabulary (Unoh 1983, Petscher

2010, Olajide 1998, Seitz, 2010). The refusal will invariably prevent them from performing well in reading comprehensive tests

Petscher (2010) who posit that students need to be equipped with rich vocabulary which engenders good performance in reading comprehension task. These reading scholars have also established that learners who are slow at comprehension will almost possibly develop a feeling of dislike for books and this will most likely prevent them from having adequate practice in reading. This will invariably result in poor standards of reading. It naturally follows then that less than the one with positive attitude. By implication too, he is not likely to perform well in reading comprehension task. The essence of the thesis is that positive attitude toward reading are highly crucial for reading comprehension performance as revealed in this study.

In addition to the acquiring of rich vocabulary the learner gets acquainted with the strategies required for decoding meaning and invariably becomes proficient in language use. There is hardly any doubt that it is proficiency in language use that enables learners to read, comprehend and consequently develop intellectually. In summmary, the finding implies that positive attitude to reading is a foundation for reading comprehension performance and indeed, other language skills and general academic achievement.

Conclusion

The study concluded that secondary school students have negative attitude towards reading and so they have not been performing well in reading comprehension. The performance level of the students in reading comprehension was low. Majority of them had low scores at the higher-order skills of reading comprehension while, they had high scores at the literal level.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers of English should develop the habit of reading extensively and thus serve as role models for their students.
2. Teachers training institutions such as colleges of education and faculty of education in the universities should equip the service of teachers with the knowledge and skills required for teaching the three types of reading behaviour and reading comprehension in secondary schools.
3. Parents should be sensitive to their role as role models in recreational reading. They should exhibit positive attitude to recreational reading and encourage their children to read beyond prescribed school texts.
4. Education policy makers, school authorities and other stakeholders in education should appraise the importance of reading in the school curriculum and reflect this in their policies. Public and private schools in both rural and urban centers should be adequately stocked with

materials that will serve the reading interest of learners. Partnership between education planners and teachers is crucial for effective teaching and learning in schools.

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