

DECLINE IN READING CULTURE IN SOME SELECTED UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study consists of professional librarians and Para-professionals at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State (109) and the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State (102). A total of 211 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and only 198 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, which is about 94% response rate. Its major findings revealed the benefits of imbibing in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria which include academic performance, educational advancement, equipping citizenry with knowledge, skills and attitudes required for economic self-sufficiency and poverty reduction and sustainable development. The study also showed the causes of the decline in reading culture as real-time chatting, watching movies, listening to music, and social media. The solutions to the decline in reading culture are the positive decision by library users, scholarships for best performance, grant awards and automatic employment for best students. The study recommended that orientation of new and old students should be carried out by librarians on how to inculcate their reading habits to them, the Federal and State government should award grants and scholarships to best performing students to encourage others to put in their best.

Keywords: University libraries, decline reading culture

Introduction

The university library is vital to our academic and social lives. Libraries promote literacy and improve people's knowledge and skills, resulting in increased productivity and a contribution to national development. A library, according to Futalib (2015), is an institution charged with the acquisition, organization, and storage of recorded knowledge in various media for study, research, and consultation. Libraries are swift

and efficient agents of educational, social, economic, and political transformation in the areas where they are built. The library's purpose is to benefit society by preserving the record of human thoughts, ideas, and expressions and making them accessible to all. One of the particular tasks that the library plays for library users is to ensure that they adopt a standard reading culture by visiting the library frequently at all times. Reading is the ability to grasp, make sense of, and completely interpret written symbols or

characters. Reading, according to Aina et al. (2011), is the process of grasping the representation of written and printed symbols by looking at them, identifying them, and sometimes verbalizing these visual indicators. Reading culture is widely viewed as an essential tool for arming citizens with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for economic self-sufficiency, poverty reduction, and long-term development.

Furthermore, reading according to Adigun and Ogundipe (2011) requires the application of extensive mental processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful components and comprehend them as a thought component to recognize a printed message. Reading is a talent that must be cultivated from a child's infancy, and the library must play a significant role in achieving this goal. The goals of a school library, according to Jato, Oguniyi, and Olubiyo (2014), are to instil literacy appreciation in readers, encourage the development of reading abilities, and serve as a clinic for intellectual growth, serve as a topic information centre, and complement the school curriculum. According to Ogbonna and Obiozor (2009), a school library improves pupils' academic performance and broadens their knowledge beyond the classroom. The libraries, according to Funmilayo (2013), provide reading strategies for large and small groups, as well as pupils, with an emphasis on intellectual content, information literacy, and the learner. However, in Nigeria, this is rapidly dwindling (Agbama, 2015).

In this vein, Adesulu, Adebuseyo, and Amos (2017) remark that most students do not read today, instead they spend much too much time and energy viewing videos, listening to music, and conversing in real-time, leaving them with little time and energy to read useful items, such as their school texts. Mr Cornelius Audu, a library officer at the University of Maiduguri's Ramat Library, explained his view on the subject as follows: "Whenever

you see a large number of students here (at the library), it's because they have a test, assignment, or examination, which is in contrast to the serious culture we used to have. According to the United Nations, one out of every four young people in underdeveloped countries is unable to read (Provost, 2014). In this perspective, the African continent is the most vulnerable, as reading is not strongly ingrained in most African countries' socio-cultural structures. African society is a conversational or oral society, not a reading society (Nalusiba, 2010). Information is largely communicated by word of mouth in an oral civilization. Africans prefer to converse rather than read. Furthermore, the majority of Africans regard reading as a form of work rather than a leisure activity. The decline of a weak reading culture has significant societal and individual consequences. It creates a knowledge gap and slows progress on a societal level. A society with a bad reading culture, on the other hand, is doomed to experience leadership crises due to a scarcity of knowledgeable leaders. Individually, a weak reading culture stifles personal development and life achievement. Many people have been killed or imprisoned because they refused to read warning signals or instructions. This is the reason why many pupils in today's schools do not achieve well academically (Akong, 2014). Poverty is bred by a reduction in poor reading culture. The only thing that separates the wealthy from the poor is knowledge and its proper application (Onyango et al., 2015). It is in light of this situation that this title decline in reading culture in selected university libraries in southeast Nigeria is imperative.

Statement of the Problem

Students' academic performance has improved as a result of their reading culture, as well as their ability to pass exams. The reduction in reading culture among library users in recent years has hampered their academic

achievement and knowledge advancement. Today, rapid failures are being recorded as a result of students, teenagers, and library users' inability to resist the reading culture. As a form of relaxation, they choose real-time chatting, watching movies, and attending musical concerts, which has severely hampered their reading culture.

It has been observed that studies on the decline in reading culture exist in different literature ie Kayuni, (2017) Effects of poor reading culture on distance education students' academic performance at Kwame Nkrumah University in Zambia, and Ayoti (2015), Free Newspaper and reading culture: a culture of the People Daily, (unpublished Master's Thesis) the University of Nairobi, respectively, but no study has been done on the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria. This study is therefore undertaken to proffer a solution to the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria, and the world at large.

Objective of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to examine the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out the benefits of imbibing in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria.
2. To find out the causes of decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria.
3. To proffer solutions to the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Research Question

1. What are the benefits of imbibing in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria?

2. What are the causes of the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria?
3. What strategies could be used to proffer solutions to the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria?

Literature Review

The University Library's primary goal is to assist the University's mission of promoting teaching, learning, and research. Undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, and other members of the university community are served by the university library. Because of its unique function in the university system in developing a reading culture, the library plays a vital part in determining the quality of a university. Because they collect statistics on library visitors regularly, librarians working in a university library can determine the level of reading culture in the library to a large extent.

Reading culture is the cornerstone of literacy; it aids in the development of individuals' comprehension and critical thinking skills. The establishment of a reading culture among undergraduate students helps pupils acquire general knowledge and broaden their horizons. Reading culture, on the other hand, is rapidly dwindling. Poverty, corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of specialized quiet reading locations like libraries have all harmed the reading culture. The fall in educational standards has had a significant impact on reading ability. It's even more difficult when you have to cope with all of the distractions and hardships that come with being an adult in Nigeria. Perhaps our socioeconomic situation isn't conducive to reading. According to a recent UN report, almost 250 million youngsters around the world are unable to read and write (UNICEF, 2015). And out of that number, 130 million have gone to school. This means that illiteracy, which is closely linked to a lack of

reading culture, has become a global concern, though it is more frequent in underdeveloped countries than in developed countries. A considerable lot of writing has been written about Africa's weak reading culture. In Kenya, for example, like in Uganda and Rwanda, there is a widespread lack of reading culture (Nalusiba, 2010; Onyango et al., 2015; Otike, 2011; Ruterana, 2012). The situation is similar in Zambia and Nigeria (Haliru et al., 2015; Kayuni, 2017). The situation in Tanzania and Botswana is not much better (Akande and Adenyinka, 2007; Kumburu, 2011). Africa's reading culture is so low that one white man allegedly stated, "If you want to hide something from an African, put it in a book." He is implying that the average African does not read.

If reading culture declines irreversibly, the writing profession and the publishing sector are in grave danger. The decline or collapse of the publishing business has long-term ramifications for societal enlightenment and the development of human capital in the country. More importantly, the inability to read effectively is a roadblock to a civilized political culture and economic development. To achieve the socioeconomic heights of our hopes and ambitions, we must produce literate citizens who can read extensively to access the world's rich trove of information and participate in the world's dynamic civilization. It is consequently critical that policymakers in Nigeria monitor and assess education policies and literacy programs using evidence-based data or information. Reading habits must be created and cultivated throughout one's life in a variety of methods, the majority of which necessitates a great deal of effort and determination. Reading should not be done as a consequence of intentional pressure imposed by academic duties or as a means of preparing for a job interview. Rather, it must occur continuously to develop a person's thinking and enable him or her to evaluate, analyze, invent, conceive, determine their well-being,

and view the world as a whole (Ogbonna & Eze, 2015). Reading is thus a strategy for long-term development because it can bring about changes in people's lifestyles through improved schooling and employment, both of which result in higher revenues (Igwe, 2011).

Cause of decline in reading culture among university students

Kumburu (2011) cited the introduction of social media as a major factor in the loss of reading culture among Nigerian elementary and secondary school students. She claims that many students nowadays choose to search for knowledge on the internet rather than in books. "Facebook, Whatsapp, and other such services take their time and do not read thoroughly." The newest technological explosion in the information age is social media. It's an online networking platform that focuses on fostering, strengthening, and reflecting on social relationships between people who have a common interest, purpose, or activity. Since the inception of social networking sites in 1994, social media has allowed people all over the world to communicate with one another. It is generally known that millions of individuals utilize social media daily for a variety of purposes, thereby making the world a global village (Daluba & Maxwell, 2013). Social media is used by people of all ages in our culture. Young people, notably university students, are among those who use social media intensively. The number of young people using popular social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram is rapidly increasing around the world. According to Onuoha and Saheed (2011), young people in society, particularly tertiary institutions student, uses social media common. Scholars such as Dahlstrom, Grunwald, Boor, and Vockley (2011) and Al-rahmi, Othman, and Musa (2014) believe that social media facilitates communication with teenagers and provides them with information

that allows them to stay informed about what is going on in society. Although multiple researchers have looked into undergraduate students' use of social media and reading habits in diverse contexts (Albarashdi, 2020; Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016), however, the amount to which student reading habits are influenced by social media has yet to be determined.

Furthermore, reading habits are shifting as a result of technological advancements. While Technology is gradually gaining control over individual lives in our society today, the reading habit is rapidly diminishing (Hinda, 2004). Reading skills are presently lacking among students. Rather, they spend more time on social media. Browsing the internet, playing with funky cell phones, and passing nonstop short messaging services appear to be the norm of the day, making reading a book or any other written material in a quiet or calm corner of a library or at home an antiquated idea for most school and adult students and adults. In a speech, Obama (2008) stated that children cannot succeed unless they raise their expectations and turn off televisions and other sources of distraction. According to Shabi and Udofia (2009), active learning from books is preferable to passive learning such as viewing movies online or chatting while playing video games

Table 1

Research Question 1

What are the benefits of imbibing in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria?

Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey research design with a questionnaire as the data gathering tool. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which yielded a mean score of 2.5 and above, which the respondents deemed acceptable, whereas a mean score of less than 2.5 was deemed unacceptable by the respondents. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire, which is made of three sections as indicated in the research questions. A total of 211 questionnaires were administered and 198 were retrieved with a return rate amounting to 94% which is acceptable for the study.

Population of the Study

The total population of the study was made up of 211 professional librarians and Para-professionals at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State and the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Library, Awka, Anambra State, which was randomly selected from the two federal universities libraries in South –East, Nigeria. The use of librarians for the population of the study is justifiable because they have records of students/users that make use of the libraries daily. A total of 211 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and only 198 copies of questionnaire were retrieved.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Academic performance	67	79	33	19	2.8	Accepted
2	Educational advancement	87	65	23	23	3.0	Accepted
3	For equipping citizenry with knowledge	88	56	34	20	3.0	Accepted
4	Skills and attitudes required for economic self-sufficiency	75	56	24	43	2.8	Accepted
5	Poverty reduction and sustainable development	72	58	38	30	2.8	Accepted

The data presented in Table 1 revealed that five (5) identified benefits of imbibing in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria are academic performance (2.8), Educational advancement (3.0), for equipping citizenry with knowledge (3.0), skills and attitudes required for economic self-sufficiency (2.8), and poverty reduction and sustainable development (2.8) respectively. These findings imply that all the above items are paramount for reading culture among students. This is supported by

Onyango et al., (2015) when they opined that the only thing that separates the wealthy from the poor is knowledge, and the only way to achieve this is to embrace and adhere strictly to reading culture. This cannot also be achieved if the students are more fun using social media than reading their books. This is also supported by Kumburu (2011) when he suggested that the introduction of social media is a major factor in the loss of reading culture among Nigerian elementary and secondary school students.

Research Question 2

What are the causes of the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Real time chatting	87	84	19	8	3.2	Accepted
2	Watching of Movies	56	76	18	48	2.7	Accepted
3	Listening to music	56	88	31	23	2.8	Accepted
4	Poverty	45	34	55	64	2.3	Rejected
5	Social media	97	56	33	12	3.2	Accepted

Table 2 above shows four (4) identified causes of the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria as follows real-time chatting (3.2) watching of movies(2.7), listening to

music(2.8), social media (3.2), while poverty (2.3) was not identified as a cause in the decline of reading culture in the university libraries understudies. This finding was supported by Kumburu (2011) who posited

that the introduction of social media is one of the major causes of the loss of reading culture among students. This can be corrected if these students are given real orientation about the importance of reading. And also, the Federal

Research Question 3

What strategies could be used to proffer solutions to the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria?

and State governments should try as must as possible to award scholarships to best-performing students and as well giving them automatic employment when they graduated.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Positive decision by library users	87	77	12	22	3.1	Accepted
2	Orientation on reading culture	58	75	34	31	2.8	Accepted
3	Scholarships for best students	45	76	45	32	2.6	Accepted
4	Grant awards	71	69	25	33	2.8	Accepted
5	Automatic Employment for best performance	46	78	23	51	2.6	Accepted

Table 3 also revealed the five (5) identified strategies that could be used to proffer solutions to the decline in reading culture in some selected university libraries in South-East Nigeria; they are positive decisions by the students/users (3.1), orientation on reading culture (2.8), and scholarships for best students (2.6), grant awards (2.8) and automatic employment for best performance (2.6) respectively.

Conclusion

The decline in reading culture among various age groups and population segments, particularly in Nigeria, has been a growing source of concern. The low reading culture in Nigeria, the various causes, and the way forward have all been thoroughly reviewed in this essay. The discussion has led to the conclusion that Nigeria has a widespread weak reading culture. The article also acclaims that a variety of reasons contribute to Nigeria's low reading culture, particularly among undergraduate students. On a more optimistic note, it is anticipated that if the problem of bad reading culture among

undergraduates is addressed, the problem of poor reading culture in Nigeria will be significantly alleviated in the long run.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- ✓ Orientation of new and old students should be carried out by librarians on how to inculcate and imbibe the reading habit on them.
- ✓ The Federal and State governments should award grants and scholarships to best-performing students to encourage others.
- ✓ Parents should discipline their children on the use of social media, that is to say, there should be time for everything and let them know the importance of reading in our society.

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