

BEYOND ACADEMIC PROWESSION

a
Festschrift in Honour of
Chief Ernest Elijah James Etim
(1933 - 2000)

Edited by
Felicia Edu-Uwem Etim

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Abstract

Reading is a vital tool such that its acquisition exposes one to unparalleled opportunities and one who lacks it, stands to suffer challenges occasioned by failure, thereby resulting in maladaptive behaviours. This study investigates factors responsible for youth's lack of reading culture which results in some of their frustrations and vices. The survey research design was used and the instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The population of the study was 2,101 students with about 10% being 210 subjects randomly selected as sample. Four hypotheses were generated and data collected subjected to percentage and t-value analyses. Results indicated that youths had a negative attitude towards reading, that this was a reflection of their parental misplacement of priorities, parental lack of reading culture as well as the apathy shown by youths towards electronic reading. Based on the above, the paper recommended, effective grassroots advocacy by librarians to sensitize parents on the need to read, motivate their wards to read and develop the reading culture through the provision of reading resources, reorientate youths' minds with bibliotherapy, and rebrand societal priorities in child care.

Introduction

Academic achievement is a function of the interaction between a student's innate intelligence and his ability to read effectively. Poor study habits have been identified as a major source of adolescent academic underachievement. Ekpo (2007) presented research results as revealing that in school work, potential intelligence accounts for 55 percent, effective study habits about 40 percent while environmental factors account for about 5 percent. She concluded that "if the method of studies a student adopts is not effective, then he is likely to end up an underachiever". Studies, we all know, is anchored on reading and where the adolescent is not introduced to reading for fun and as a habit, he could end up as an underachiever.

According to Krolac (2005), the most important factor in a child's acquisition of literacy is the reading practices of the parents. Many studies including those of 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

(PIRLS) and German Foundation Sutton Lesson on Reading Behaviour (GFSLRB) in the new century among others revealed that "the amount of books and reading materials in a family was the deciding factor influencing the reading scores of children. Also concluded was that the positive attitude of parents and the availability of reading materials at home are the most important factors in creating lifelong motivation in children.

Christopher (2006) attributes the poor reading culture in Nigeria to absence of advocacy or failure to put in place those who would ensure that the Nigerian child acquires the language arts needed in future for independent reading and performing educational tasks. He went on to assert that "today, the privileges the Nigerian child enjoyed in the 60s regarding book ownership are no where to be found and added that where as elsewhere today children are using multiple media to express themselves.

This confirms that Nigerian children are short changed at an early critical age when reading skills should be acquired. He further maintained that although 80 – 90 percent of book output is educational, provision of school books in the country is very poor and could be lower than 10 percent in subjects other than mathematics and English Language especially in government schools.

On the other hand, the home is plagued with other values such as spending time to meet up economically, social battering with matrimonial problems, absence of libraries at home and at school and misplacement of priorities on amassing wealth and showing children off with clothes and forgetting completely about books and their values. This way, they neglect reading to their young children or showing examples of reading themselves. The above accounts for youths' non-challant attitude towards their studies in our universities. In a survey conducted by Anigbogu (2008) on students' negative attitude to reading, 75 percent of the students felt that reading was no fun; 79 percent studied mostly for examination and tests while 60.8 percent felt that reading was boring among others. Generally, the comments they gave included the following

- (a) They feel reading texts were too tedious.
- (b) They honestly read texts just for examination.
- (c) They felt afraid of completing texts before examination.
- (d) Some felt that reading novels was irrelevant considering their areas of study.

The above attitude affects the youths involved as they are faced with academic challenges that leave them sometimes helpless,

embarrassed, distressed and frustrated. As a defence, some of them resort to maladaptive behaviours such as drug – taking, alcoholism, coercion, cultism, sexual harassment, sorting (inter-student and lecturer-student), finally armed-robery and kidnapping.

Yet books are known to be a panacea for solving emotional, physical, psychological and even mental problems. Scogin (2007) in support asserted that "books are very powerful tools with which to guide youths' thinking, strengthen their characters, shape their behaviours and solve their problems". But most people do not seem to recognize this great role of bibliotherapy. For example, studies conducted by psychologists as quoted by Ekpo (2007) discuss treatment of psychic problems without making any reference to reading. This glaringly excludes bibliotherapy which has long been identified as a panacea to all psychological/maladaptive behaviours (Scogin:2007), (Udofia:2009).

The library therefore has a huge responsibility of educating the populace. This was the genesis of the establishment of public libraries in North Anglo-American colonies which they did using discussion clubs, librarians modelling themselves and provision of citizenship classes to awaken the populace's consciousness. This was also the case on Thailand in the 1980s where public libraries embarked upon radical changes "that transformed libraries roles from reading rooms to those of movements of social change and the construction of civil society" (krolac:2005). With this, public libraries came to exist as agencies that provide information on community issues such as health, employment, continuing education, social history and so-an. This reduced the number of frustrated youths. Creating an informed citizenry who participate positively in the society. This is value re-orientation, a process which will enhance behaviour modification and reinforce desirable behaviours in Nigerian youths.

Statement of the Problem

The observable and pervasive lack of reading culture among youths and their increasing academic under-achievement accounts for students' use of alternative means to pass examinations. This is consequent upon lapses in the part of parents as well as schools in providing early reading resources and literacy skills. This calls for an awakening of the intellectual stimulus of Nigerian youths through books,

since the value of books is permanent and constructive. This therefore requires value re-orientation.

The attitude of youths towards reading is on the decline because the availability of reading resources which should emanate from homes are not made readily accessible; parents form a greater bulk of the problems associated with poor reading culture.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. determine youths' attitude towards reading.
2. examine the availability of reading resources in youths' homes.
3. ascertain the level of youths' parental involvement in reading.
4. determine youths' involvement in electronic reading.

Significance of the study

The finding of this study will help librarians plan better strategies to inform the public on the usefulness of reading. It will also help education planners who must go beyond policy making to ensure that school administrators and school librarians as well as parents, collaborate and work towards inculcating reading culture in children. It will particularly serve as an eye opener to parents who will learn not to misplace their priorities.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. Youths have no significant positive attitude towards reading.
2. Information resources are not significantly available to youths at home.
3. Parental attitude towards reading does not significantly encourage youths to read.
4. Youths have no significant positive attitude towards electronic reading.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was the survey method. The population of the study was 2,101 students made up of freshmen

students of the faculties of Education, Arts, Science, Basic Medical Science and Pharmacy of University of Uyo.

The researchers used stratified random sampling technique in selecting subjects for the study. Basically, freshmen of the faculties of Education, Arts, Science, Basic Medical Sciences and Pharmacy were randomly selected for the study. This gave a sample of 210 subjects.

A 19-item structured questionnaire was designed and administered as instant diaries to youths on the campus. A total of 210 questionnaires were administered and 116 were perfectly completed. The frequencies were converted to raw scores and the analyses were done based on the raw scores and analysed using t-test statistics.

Hypothesis I

Youths have no significant positive attitude towards reading.

Table I shows the responses of youths on issues of reading in Percentages

S/N	Youths Reading Attitude	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Reading to pass examination	78	30	6	2
2.	Reading to keep current	42	46	10	16
3.	Reading from parental pressure	14	30	8	64
4.	I read to do my assignment	52	38	20	6
5.	I read because I love reading	56	38	8	4

On the whole, an overwhelming majority of the respondents totalling 108 agreed that they read to pass their examinations while eighty eight (88) read current affairs to keep abreast with what goes on around the world. On the contrary, many declined reading based on parental prompting with only 44 positive responses as against the 72 respondents who had little or on prompting from their parents to read. Reading to do assignments and loving to read also scored high with 90 and 94 respectively.

Hypothesis 2

Information resources are not significantly available to youths at home.

Table II: Availability of Reading Resources for Youths at Home in Percentages

S/N	Availability of Reading Resources at Home	SA	A	D	SD
1.	We have an organized library at home	14	36	12	54
2.	My father provides the books	18	26	2	70
3.	My mother provides the books	14	26	4	72
4.	Most of them are my school texts	30	38	14	34

On the issue of having an organized library at home, positive responses were only fifty (50), while 66 gave negative responses. Only forty-four (44) agreed that their fathers do buy books for the home. Forty (40) agreed that their mothers do the same as against 72 and 76 who disagreed respectively, 68 of the respondents agreed, that they do buy books for reading while 48 stated that they do not buy books with their money.

Hypothesis 3

Parental attitude towards reading does not significantly encourage youths to read.

Table III: Utilisation of Reading Resources at Youths' Homes in percentages

S/N	Utilisation of Resources at Home	SA	A	D	SD
1.	We have books scattered about	14	36	10	50
2.	My father reads them	20	36	18	42
3.	My mother reads them	12	34	18	52
4.	I read them	56	30	6	24

On the few books that there are at home, fifty (50) respondents indicated that the books are scattered about while sixty (60) indicated that they are not, which agrees with the former majority negative responses on having organized libraries at home. Further reading at home was rated at forty-four (44) while non-reading was rated seventy-two (72). On mothers, positive responses were only forty (40) while mothers' non-reading was scored seventy-six (76). This shows on the whole that youths parental reading at home is very poor. Youths rated themselves eighty-six (86) while non-reading at home was rated at thirty (30).

Hypothesis 4

Youths are not favourably disposed to electronic reading

Table IV: Responses on On-line Reading in Percentages.

S/N	Specific Reading Attitude Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I browse the internet for my result	36	24	8	48
2.	I browse the internet for games	14	20	8	84
3.	I browse the internet to make friends	8	28	10	70
4.	I browse the internet to watch films	10	8	2	96
5.	I browse the internet for my studies	60	32	4	20
6.	I browse the internet for news around the world	20	28	8	60

Out of the one hundred and sixteen (116) respondents, sixty (60) stated that they do browse the net to get their results while fifty-six (56) get their result on-line as their JAMB result was published only on line. Very few of them numbering 24 use the net for games while ninety-two (92) do very little or, nothing at all. Browsing to make friends was given only 36 positive responses and eighty (80) negative ones. Watching films stood at eighteen (18) positive and ninety-eight (98) negative responses. On the contrary, browsing for study purposes as expected showed ninety-two (92) positive responses and twenty-four (24) negative responses. Finally, browsing to read novels was scored 48 while negative responses were higher with sixty-eight (68).

Data Analyses

Data received were analysed using t-test statistics as follows:

Table 5: T-test result on youths attitude towards reading.

Response	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Positive	58	84.4	24.11	114	0.33	1.96
Negative	58	31.2	24.19			

Decision at $P < 0.05$

Since the calculated t-value of 0.33 is less than the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is retained. Based on the above decision, it is concluded that youths are not favourably disposed to reading. This accounts for their low academic performance.

Table 6: t-test result on availability of reading resources for youths.

Response	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Positive	58	50.5	12.37	114	0.16	1.96
Negative	58	66	12.37			

Decision at $P < 0.05$

From table 2 above, the means of youths' opinions on availability of reading resources at home were 50.5 and 66 on positive and negative responses respectively with the calculated t-value being 0.16 that is less than the critical value of 1.96. Thus the null hypothesis was retained and conclusion made that reading resources are not available for youths at home.

Table 7: T-test results on parental attitude towards reading.

Response	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Positive	58	59.5	18.14	114	0.5	1.96
Negative	58	55	17.32			

Decision at $P < 0.05$

The significant t-value of 0.5 at alpha level of 0.05 resulted. This was less than the critical value of 1.96, therefore, null hypothesis was retained. This brought the study to the conclusion that parental attitude towards reading does not encourage youths to read.

Table 8: t-test results on youths attitude towards electronic reading.

Response	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Positive	58	46.3	27.14	114	0.17	1.96
Negative	58	69.6	27.14			

Decision at $P < 0.05$

From table 8 above, it can be observed that the calculated t-value of 0.17 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis was thus retained. This implies that youths had no significant positive attitude towards electronic reading.

Discussion

The study reveals that youths have a general apathy towards reading especially texts that are not of their choice disciplines. Even in their choice discipline, reading done as a laborious tasks that cannot be avoided.

Anigoghu (2008) conducting a survey into students' negative attitude towards reading reveals 75 percent of the students felt that reading was no fun; 79 percent maintained that they studied mostly for

examination and tests and 60 percent opined that reading was boring. They concluded that reading novels was irrelevant. This attitude affects youth generally making some of them underachievers and resorting to maladaptive behaviours as a defense.

Availability of reading resources has great impacts on children's reading habits. With reading materials to play with, read for leisure, studied and utilised for other purposes being a habit from children at school right from the early years, children develop the reading culture informally. The 2001 progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and German Foundation Sutton Lesson on reading behaviors (GPSLRB) reports reveals, in consonance with the above assertion that "the amount of books and reading materials in a family was a deciding factor influencing the reading scores of children. Unfortunately, most school libraries, do not also provide adequate reading resources for children and sometimes not at all.

Utilization of reading resources at youths homes has a great impact on children. Basically, parents are children's first role models before teachers and other school workers. Vital as reading resources and a well kept library are to children, parents of most youths do not attempt to make resources available, organise and encourage children to use the resources by first doing so. Whereas, it is known that the twin-availability of reading materials in a family and the positive attitude of parents are the most important factors in creating lifelong motivation to read in children.

Most of the respondents use the interest for pleasure but from their responses do not read on the net even to check their JAMB results; in this electronic age where results are published online. This shows that reading culture is a critical problem of our youths. When they are faced with academic challenges, they are left helpless, embarrassed and frustrated especially with the high demands of the same parents who taught them to misplace their priorities. As a defense, they resort to maladaptive behaviours.

Incidentally, the same reading resource that would have been adopted as a panacea for solving these emotional, psychological and mental problems are not recognised for playing these role. Whereas Scogin (2007) and Udoфia (2009) clearly indicated that with books, youths thinking could be guided right, their characters strengthened and behaviours shaped and problems solved.

Unfortunately, psychologists like Akinboye (1987) and Ekpo (2007) do not seem to recognise this great role of bibliotherapy in discussing the

treatment of psychic problems. This has implications for libraries. As such, Etim (2009) advocated that libraries and librarians have a great responsibility to play to enlighten the populace and speak out for the need to read and to be informed.

Summary and Conclusion

The value of reading to re-orientate the minds of youths cannot be underestimated. Reading resources at home are grossly inadequate as such, youths resort to chatting online, watching movies online, playing games and browsing the net only for assignments and JAMB results. The provision of relevant and adequate reading resources will possibly encourage the use of bibliotherapy in the treatment of maladaptive behaviours in youths. Consequently therefore, the availability of well stocked public libraries by government would help to a great extent in the preservation and presentation of cultural, economic, political and religious values which could in turn serve as a means for value reorientation of Nigerian youths.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

- a. Librarians especially those in public libraries must adopt strategies to popularizes libraries and their services, making its relevance known from the grassroot. This will underscore a link between librarians and the clientele for which it was established, as was done in Sweden, Finland and USA. Public libraries should redesign and expand their modes of service delivery to attract the communities in which they are located with such programmes like talks, seminars, awareness campaigns youths reading clubs and so on.
- b. They should co-operate with publishers off and on-line for its collection development, collecting and providing resources that appeal to the communities in which they are located electronically and offer access to reading.
- c. Efforts should be intensified by librarians at inculcating the reading culture in youths to engage them meaningfully.

- d. Youth problems which appear to be ignored should be given better attention by government and all of them catered for, especially the unemployed.
- e. Libraries should bring home to the adult public the usefulness of reading and the need to add reading to their multiple alternative ways of spending leisure time such as watching *Africa Magic* thereby misplacing their priorities.
- f. Librarians should create awareness on the available information and its usefulness to citizens and opportunities that such knowledge can open to them especially through the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities.
- g. There should be effective grassroot advocacy by librarians to sensitive parents on the need to read, motivate their wards to read and develop the reading culture through reinforcement and provision of reading resources. This will invariably have a therapeutic effect on the youths who will grow to be better Nigerian citizens.

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