

**FACTORS INFLUENCING POOR READING CULTURE AMONGST SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IKWERRE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE**

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**Abstract**

The paper sets out to investigate the factors influencing poor reading culture amongst secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. Additionally, the paper adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of study comprised all public junior and senior secondary students in the Local Government under review. A sample size of 200 students was selected using random sampling technique from five selected public secondary schools in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire using a four-point likert scale determined by cron brach Alpha method with a reliability index of 0.82. Data collected was analyzed utilizing mean and standard deviation to proffer solution to the research questions. The findings of the paper indicate that lack of well-equipped school libraries, inadequate provision of reading materials at home, addiction to social media and use of smart phones, lack of parental encouragement and poor teaching method significantly promoted poor reading culture among secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. Based on the findings, the paper concluded that poor reading culture is not occasioned by a single factor but multiplicity of factors. The study therefore recommended inter-alia that the Rivers State Government and Ikwerre Local Government Area authorities should update school libraries with relevant books and ensure that teachers and students maximize their usage.

***Keywords: Factors, Culture, Reading Influencing, Poor, Secondary, Schools.***

**Introduction**

The relevance of reading culture for the academic breakthrough of the students cannot be over stressed. Nwokocha et. al (2024) opine that reading is a fundamental skill essential for academic achievement, personal growth and lifelong learning. However, in recent years there has been a growing concern about poor reading culture amongst Secondary School Students in Nigeria, with particular reference to Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. Despite frantic efforts of government, educators and parents in promoting reading culture, many students in Secondary schools of Ikwerre Local Government extraction still grapple with reading concerns. This untoward reading culture has serious implication for their academic strides and future prospects. Research has confirmed that students who engage in regular reading tend to do better academically, possess better vocabulary, and are more likely to make successes in their careers than those averse to regular reading habits. Moreso, several factors have been adduced as contributory variables to poor reading culture amongst secondary school students with particular reference to Ikwerre Local Government Area. These include lack of parental support, increasing popularity of digital media and social networking. These are major distractions. The poor reading habit is further complicated by socio economic factors such as poverty, poor infrastructure and lack of access to quality education. Many students in the area under investigation struggle through the nose to access quality education and this can have a negative impact on their reading culture. Sadly, there is a popular saying that "For one to successfully conceal crucial issue from a black man or an African man write it down". In this connection, poor reading culture in Nigeria especially amongst secondary school students in

Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State is alarming thus creating setbacks to the nation in all sectors. However, Onyekachi and Nwosu (2021), Adeyemi and Ige (2023), Wokoma and Udochukwu (2020), noted that poor reading culture is not just an academic problem, rather a behavioural risk factor. Therefore, the factors that influence poor reading culture among secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government may likewise contribute to the rise in anti-social behaviours among students in this local area. Additionally, Onyekachi and Nwosu (2021), studies have established a link between time management and academic performance amongst Secondary School Students. In the views of Adebayo (2020) lack of effective time management amongst students results in procrastination, reduced study time consequently leading to lower achievement especially in major subjects like English Language. The implication for secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government is that poor time management may likely be responsible for poor reading culture and poor academic outcomes among students Onyekachi and Nwosu (2021).

Scholars affirm that reading is the major tool for knowledge transmission across generations. In particular, Ukpaka (2020) noted that knowledge is power and that readers are leaders because reading equips humans with the tools to stay knowledgeable and avoid ignorance. He further observed that poor reading culture has led to a dearth of knowledge in Nigeria's workforce and weak leadership profile. Okechukola (2017) argued that reading must evolve with technology so that knowledge can be transmitted to succeeding generations through digital devices. The implication for Ikwerre Local Government Area is that her secondary school students lack the tools to receive and transmit knowledge which ultimately affect both academic performance and societal development.

The study therefore sets out to achieve the following objectives/purposes;

1. Closely examine the factors influencing poor reading culture amongst secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Examine if students gender traits influence poor reading culture.
3. Determine the extent to which Socio-economic status of the students influences poor reading culture

### **Hypothesis**

This paper shall seek to raise data and argument to test the following stated hypotheses:

1.  $H_1$ : There is no significance between socio-economic status of students and poor reading culture.
2.  $H_2$ : There is a significant relationship between objective reading habits and academic performance among secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.

### **Poor Reading Culture Amongst Secondary School Students In Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.**

The social, economic, cultural and political life of a nation is influenced by the percentage of it's citizens who are literate. This is the more reason why Cuba has a vibrant economy despite decades of diplomatic conflicts with the world's strongest nation.

However, Akor and Udensi (2018) perceives poor reading culture as the inability of students at all levels of academic endeavour to engage in consistent reading leading to below the average academic performance. In the same fashion, Chukwu (2024) describes poor reading culture of students as a situation where the student performs below the average asserting further that student's poor reading culture can be consequential to school drop outs. Oluwale (2017) in his views contended that the reading culture of Nigerian Students declined consistently from their elementary years to secondary and tertiary levels. This Henry (2017) in his study of SS2 and JSS2 students in Ikwerre and Port Harcourt Local Government Area identifies the factors that affect learning as; insufficient textbooks, teacher truancy, poor financial disposition of parents, difficulty in comprehension, negative attitude of teachers to English and Mathematics, Lack of knowledgeable trained teachers and lack of library resources in secondary schools. Regrettably however, poor reading culture is an undesirable phenomenon in every educational system. In more specific terms,

for Nigeria to make progress and curb the menace of poor reading amongst students in the Secondary Education Sector requires a very high academic standard in terms of her manpower development for upward mobility or drive.

### **Factors Influencing Poor Reading Culture Amongst Secondary Students In Ikwerre Local Government Area**

Henry (2017) identified factors that influence poor reading culture as follows;

Lack/insufficient textbooks and teacher truancy: Lack of school libraries and reading materials, inefficient school administration, low income levels of parents, uneducated parental backgrounds, inter parental violence, authoritarian permissive homes and polygamy, peer group influence, use of social media appliances, watching violent motivated movies, lack of knowledgeable teachers, negative attitudes of teacher towards English Language and other core subjects; nonpayment of rural allowances to teachers in the rural areas. In sum, Henry (2017) categorized these factors under, home and socio economic factors, personal and behavioural factors, teacher and system factor and environmental factors.

### **Effect Of Poor Reading Culture Amongst Students In Ikwerre Local Government Area**

Poor reading culture adversely affects students academically, socially and personally in the area under review and generally in Nigeria.

Henry (2017) in this same vein identified and categorized effect of poor reading culture amongst students as Academic effects; mass failure in public exams, exams expo, limited library and slow comprehension, psychological effects, low esteem, exam fever due to repeated poor performance, lack of critical thinking, social effects as; peer group influence, weak participation in debates, quiz, reading competition, etc, career effects; difficulty in gaining admissions, poor job opportunities occasioned by inability to do well in the job interview; National effects as increased social vices-little minds, low national development, high unemployment, etc.

### **Solution to poor reading culture amongst students**

Having extrayed some factors and effects of poor reading culture in the area under investigation and Nigeria by extension, it is pertinent we proffer strategies to adopt in stemming the tide of poor reading culture among students;

1. Improved finding: Funds are crucial to the development of education and libraries. Therefore, the Nigerian government should improve, on its finding of the education sector.
2. Establishment of libraries: NGOs and BOs and other professional bodies should be encouraged to assist in the promotion of reading culture through support or establishment of libraries.
3. Storytelling, reading together, formation of reading club and conducive study environment should be encouraged among students.
4. Reading in the languages should be encouraged early with the students so they can progress with it.
5. Encouragement of use of the library: Teachers should encourage maximum use of the library and it's resources by giving students assignments that would necessitate frequent visits to the library.

### **THERETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study adopted the environmental factors theory. Akinyemi and Olatunji (2020) are noted for core principles of environmental factors theory which explains that poor reading culture among secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area is due mainly to the physical, social and cultural environment the students inhabit and such could either provide the right conditions for reading to fester or it suppresses it.

Akinyemi and Olatunji in Bundura (2020) further argued that students learn by watching others.

They further opined that students who are surrounded by peers who use and are addicted to drugs and avoid books will likely emulate those behaviours. The applicability therefore of this theory to the study has assisted in explaining the fact that a student in the area under investigation who

leaves home with no books invariably attends a school with a locked library, lives in a community where no one discusses books related matters will likely not read even when they are intelligent.

### Research Method

The Methodological approach adopted in this study is descriptive research, Osuala (2016) notes that "descriptive research is that research which specifies the nature of a given phenomenon, the specification can be simple or it can be complicated. As a result, the method adopted in this research is the survey method. The paper sourced data from both primary and secondary sources. While the primary sources are basically observations, interviews, focused group discussions and questionnaire, the secondary sources are the use of text books, journals, magazines, government publications and materials downloaded from the internet. The primary data was gathered through the questionnaires distributed to some randomly selected one hundred and eighty respondents from Ikwerre Local Government Area. The retrieved questionnaires numbers 180 out of 180 were used for data analysis. The method of data analysis is the use of simple percentage in respondents' positions to questions posed.

### Analysis Showing Factors Influencing Poor Reading Culture Among Secondary School Students in Ikwerre Local Government Area Of River State.

As indicated in the research method above, a total of one hundred and eighty copies of questionnaires were administered. However, all the one hundred and eighty copies of questionnaires were retrieved and found useable for analysis, representing 100% per cent return rate. Interestingly, the data were analyzed using frequency counts and mean scores. A criterion mean of 2.50 and above was accepted while mean below 2.50 was rejected.

#### 4.1 Research Question one:

To what extent do home/environmental factors influence poor reading culture Amongst Secondary School Students in Ikwerre Local Government Area in Rivers State?

**Table 4.1:**

**TABLE ONE**

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                                 | 5A | A  | D  | SD | MEAN | DECISION |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|------|----------|
| 1   | Lack of books and reading materials at home affects students reading culture.         | 88 | 70 | 12 | 10 | 3.31 | Agreed   |
| 2   | Low educational level of parents contributes to poor reading habits of students.      | 75 | 78 | 15 | 12 | 3.20 | Agreed   |
| 3   | Parents do not serve as reading role models to their children.                        | 80 | 72 | 18 | 10 | 3.20 | Agreed   |
| 4   | Poor electricity and lack of conducive reading environment at home discourage reading | 70 | 75 | 20 | 15 | 3.11 | Agreed   |
| 5   | Parents prefer children to do house chores instead of reading                         | 65 | 80 | 23 | 13 | 3.09 | Agreed   |
| 6   | Economic hardship at home prevents parents from buying books                          | 85 | 68 | 16 | 11 | 3.26 | Agreed   |
|     | GRAND MEAN                                                                            |    |    |    |    | 3.20 | AGREED   |

N= 180. Decision Rule: Mean  $\geq$  2.50

= Agreed mean < 2.50 = disagreed

Table 4.1 indicates the analyses of respondents' view on home/environmental factors. The result shows that all 6 items recorded mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50 with a grand mean of 3.20.

Specifically, respondents agreed that lack of books at home (mean =3.31) economic hardship (mean =3.26) and parents not serving as models (mean=3.21) are major home factors. Other factors include low parental education, poor electricity, and preference for house chores. This presupposes that home/environmental factors significantly influence poor reading culture amongst secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of River State. This finding lends credence to Akindele (2020) who opined that home background is the basic avenue where reading habits is formed.

### Research Question Two

To what extent do school factors influence poor reading culture amongst secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area?

**TABLE TWO**

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                                   | SA | A  | D  | SD | MEAN        | DECISION      |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|-------------|---------------|
| 1.  | Lack of functional school library discourages students from reading.                    | 92 | 65 | 13 | 10 | 3.33        | Agreed        |
| 2.  | Inadequate text books and reading materials in schools affect reading culture.          | 85 | 70 | 15 | 10 | 3.28        | Agreed        |
| 3.  | Teachers do not encourage students to read beyond class notes.                          | 78 | 72 | 18 | 12 | 3.20        | Agreed        |
| 4.  | Absence of reading periods in the school timetable contributes to poor reading culture. | 75 | 70 | 22 | 13 | 3.15        | Agreed        |
|     | <b>Grand Mean</b>                                                                       |    |    |    |    | <b>3.17</b> | <b>Agreed</b> |

**From table 4.2 all items had mean score above 2.50 with a grand mean of 3.17**

This shows that school related factors significantly influence poor reading culture. The lack of functional libraries and inadequate text books were rated highest.

**Table 2:** Demonstrates the respondents view on school factors influencing poor reading culture. The analysis reveal that all the seven (7) items had mean scores above 2.50. This indicates that respondents agreed that lack of library, clubs, inadequate textbooks, poor teaching methods and absence of reading periods are major likelihood of school factors influencing poor reading culture amongst secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. This findings agree with Adeyemi (2023) who posits that school environment plays a key role in developing reading culture. This is further amplified by UNESCO (2021) which emphasized that school facilities (environment) determine students reading habits.

### Research Questions Three

**To what extent do personal economic and social factors influence poor reading culture?**

**Table 4:3**

**TABLE THREE**

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                     | SA | A  | D  | SD | MEAN | DECISION |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|------|----------|
| 1.  | Excessive use of social media reduces time students spend on reading      | 95 | 60 | 15 | 10 | 3.33 | Agreed   |
| 2.  | Peer group influence makes students prefer entertainment to reading       | 80 | 75 | 14 | 11 | 3.24 | Agreed   |
| 3.  | Lack of personal interest and motivation affects students reading habits. | 70 | 78 | 20 | 12 | 3.14 | Agreed   |

|    |                                                                            |    |    |    |    |      |        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|------|--------|
| 4. | Preference for watching movies and playing games affects reading culture   | 85 | 65 | 18 | 12 | 3.24 | Agreed |
| 5. | Influence of celebrities who do not read discourages students from reading | 60 | 70 | 30 | 20 | 2.94 | Agreed |
| 6. | Students believe reading is boring and old fashioned                       | 65 | 72 | 25 | 18 | 3.02 | Agreed |
|    | Grand Mean                                                                 |    |    |    |    | 3.15 | Agreed |

Table 4.3 portrays in clear terms that all six (6) items were agreed upon with a grand mean of 3.15. This presupposes that personal, economic and social factors influence poor reading culture. Excessive social media and the preference for entertainment were the reading factors. This aptly confirms the argument of Chukwu (2024) that peer group and social media have replaced books among youths.

### Test of Hypothesis

The test of hypothesis in this study assumed the form of reflecting on the tables and its items that have questions appertaining to the hypothesis and weighing the responses in relation to grand mean decision scores.

| Hypothesis                     | GRAND MEAN | DECISION | CONCLUSION            |
|--------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------------------|
| H1: Home/Environmental factors | 3.20       | Rejected | Significant influence |
| H2: School related factors     | 3.17       | Rejected | Significant influence |

#### H<sub>1</sub>

- (a) Home/Environmental factors do not significantly influence poor reading culture amongst Secondary School Students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.
- (b) Home/Environmental factors influence significantly poor reading culture amongst Secondary School Students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.

This was tested using table 4.1 on the preceding page, which had 6 items on Home/environmental factors.

The analysis in table 4.1 revealed that all the six (6) items had mean scores above the bench mark of 2.50. The grand mean was 3.20 which is also greater than 2.50. Therefore, H<sub>1</sub>(a) is rejected where as H<sub>1</sub>(b) is accepted. The finding from H<sub>1</sub>(b) implies that students from home with inadequate books, low parental education, poor reading role models, and economic challenges are more likely to instigate poor reading culture. This aptly supports the view of Akindele (2020) on productive reading habits.

#### H<sub>2</sub>:

- (a) School related factors significantly influence poor reading culture amongst secondary students in Ikwerre Local Government Area.
- (b) School related factors signifcantly influence poor reading culture amongst secondary school in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers state.

This hypothesis was formulated to determine whether factors withing the school environment contribute to poor reading culture amongst secondary school students.

To test this hyphothesis, data from table 4.2 were used. From table 4.2 and five (5) items recorded mean scores above 2.50. The grand mean was 3.17 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, H<sub>2</sub>(a) is rejected whereas H<sub>2</sub>(b) is accepted. This also presupposes that the absence of good and conducive academic environment, lack of libraries, textbooks, reading periods and effective teaching strategies discourage students from reading. This gives credence to UNESCO (2021) that the quality of school facilities and instructional practices directly affect students reading culture.

### Findings of the Study:

Based on the results obtained, the research findings of this paper are as follows:

- (i) There is the prevalence of key factors which radiates and promotes poor reading culture amongst secondary school students of Ikwerre Local Government extraction.
- (ii) The poor state of reading culture is immensely impeding the socio-economic, religious cultural and political development of Ikwerre Local Government Area and Nigeria at large.
- (iii) Teachers and all relevant authorities have not been able to put adequate measures in place aimed at encouraging extra reading and discouraging poor teaching methodology.
- (iv) Personal and social factors significantly influence poor reading culture with a grand mean of 3.15.
- (v) The findings indicated that government and stake holders have a major role to play in promoting reading culture, through provision of relevant facilities.
- (vi) The study found that the poor comprehension of English Language and Mathematics have engendered examination malpractice spirit in the students with grand mean of 2.28.
- (vii) The solution to issues of poor reading culture will definitely require commitment and concerted efforts from the students' body and other relevant agencies to enhance educational progress.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Poor reading culture amongst secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State is a multidimensional problem occasioned by the combined influence of home/environmental factors, school related factors and personal/social factors. However, reading culture amongst students of Ikwerre Local Government Area extraction can be improved if government, parents, school authorities, teachers, NGOs and Media houses play their expected roles.

Therefore, for reading culture to improve among secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State deliberate and joint efforts from all stake holders are solicited.

In particular, but finally, reading is the foundation of education without which the academic future of the students remains a mirage.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above analysis, the following recommendations in this study are considered germane:

1. Students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State should always cultivate serious personal reading habits and reduce time on use of social media and entertainment.
2. Teachers at all levels of academics should serve as reading models, organize reading periods into the school timetable and utilize innovative teaching methods to stimulate interest in reading.
3. Parents should provide a conducive home environment for reading and supply of relevant reading materials.
4. School management at all levels should establish and adequately stock functional libraries with updated books, novels and journals.
5. Government at all levels should prioritize and increase funding for education and ensure proper implementation of the national policy on education to mother tongue instruction.
6. Reading should be made compulsory and examinable at all levels. The curriculum should cover more of African and Ikwerre literature to make reading culturally relevant to students.

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