

Parents/Guardian Attitude Toward the Reading Habit of Their Children in Osogbo Metropolis, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examines parents/guardian' attitude towards reading habit of their children in Osogbo metropolis. Twelve wards were selected from two local government areas in the metropolis by using multistage sampling technique and ten household (parents) were chosen using systematic random sampling. In all 120 parents/guardians were sampled and interviewed. The data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages, bar and pie chart. The findings revealed that most of the parent had moderate number of household members but they were low income earners. Concerning the children reading habits, most parents said that their wards only read during examination periods, only few affirmed that their wards read regularly at scheduled time. Reading facilities were not adequately provided at home and children spent most of their free time watching television, playing with friends and doing household chores. It was therefore, recommended that parents should spend more time with their children, regulate and monitor their activities at home and provide conducive environment for them to read.

Key words: Parents, guardian, reading, attitudes, habits, children, wards, household chores, television

INTRODUCTION

Children's literacy development has attracted the attention of teachers, researchers, parents and society, because it determines children's future success in reading and writing. Researchers and teachers have explored the problem from various aspects, such as teaching methods (Eldredge, 1991; McKenna *et al.*, 1995), classroom environments (Grambell, 1996), parental involvement and community and societal environment (Freppon, 1991). Different results have been found and suggestions given to help to develop children's literacy in and out of school.

Pullen and Justice (2003) mentioned that there are three skills children need to develop before they can learn to read. They need to recognize the sounds that make up words, they need to understand the function of printed words and they need to recognize and use a wide range of words when they speak with others. Parents and teachers stand a better chance of assisting their children/students to develop these important skills. Fitton and Gredler (1996) mentioned that parents can contribute greatly to the development of their children's reading skills. Parental involvement increased children's knowledge of letters and printed words and this was more effective than extra small group reading time in school and children who were encouraged to read by their parents performed better on reading tests.

Despite widespread agreement about the value of students developing lifelong reading habits, many children spend little of their free time reading for pleasure and information (Morrow, 1985). It is only parents/guardian that can create conducive environment to encourage children to read voluntarily and when children have a positive attitude toward reading, it will help them greatly in their literacy development.

However, McQuillan (1998) insisted that teaching reading methods were less important than children's access to books. He claimed that there were considerable evidence that the amount and quality of students' access to reading materials is substantively related to the amount of reading they engage in, which in turn is the most important determinant of reading achievement. Brenna (1995) hold a similar view that schools, teachers, parents and the society should provide chances for children to access a large amount of books. However, reading is a process of getting meaning from the texts and if children do not want to get any meaning from the texts, it is not reading (Dombey, 1999). Whether children read or not is determined by their attitudes toward reading. If children do not like reading or they think that reading is boring, their negative attitude will hinder their reading improvement.

Some researchers have used cash rewards to improve children's reading attitudes (Johnson, 1995). On

the contrary, McNinch (1997) found in his experiment with cash rewards, that no positive significant changes were found in children's attitudes toward academic reading. Cash rewards, therefore, are not effective in changing children's attitudes toward reading over a long period of time.

Bus *et al.* (1995) asserted that when parents read with their children, they help to increase their vocabularies, learn skills needed for literacy success and in the end become better readers. Children who enjoy these benefits become better writers and sets the stage for future academic achievements.

In this study therefore, attention will be focussed on parents/guardian' attitude towards reading habit of their children and provide suggestions on how to inculcate positive reading habit in their children.

Therefore the objectives of the study are to;

- Describe the personal characteristics of parents/guardian.
- Find out the reading habit of the children at home.
- Identify the reading facilities at home.
- Examine factors militating against the reading habit of school children.
- Determine the influence of parents/guardian on their children reading attitude.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The area of the study is Osogbo metropolis in Osun State Nigeria. The data were obtained mainly from primary sources through the used of structured questionnaires, the sampling method adopted for the study is multistage random sampling technique. Two major local governments were selected in Osogbo town and 6 wards were chosen from each of the local government area. Ten household were selected in each ward using systematic random sampling and from each household one parent/guardian was interviewed. In all 120 questionnaires were administered and collated. The data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages, bar chart and pie chart. Among many of the information collected were personal characteristics of the parents/guardians, reading facilities at home, children activities at home and the influence of parents/guardians on their children reading attitude.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 revealed that 53% of the parents/guardians interviewed were male while 48% were female. About 28% of them were civil servants, 23% were into business while

Table 1: Personal characteristics of the respondents

| Variable | Frequency | (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 63 | 52.5 |
| Female | 57 | 47.5 |
| Household size | | |
| ≤ 3 | 2 | 18.3 |
| 4-6 | 91 | 75.8 |
| ≥ 7 | 7 | 5.8 |
| Occupation | | |
| Business | 27 | 22.5 |
| Civil service | 33 | 27.5 |
| Both | 60 | 50.0 |
| Family income (₦ 0,000) | | |
| <10 | 14 | 11.7 |
| 10-40 | 50 | 41.6 |
| 40-70 | 14 | 11.7 |
| 70-100 | 21 | 17.5 |
| >100 | 21 | 17.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey 2006

Table 2: Reading attitude of children at home

| Variable | Frequency | (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|
| Reading at home | | |
| At scheduled time | 14 | 11.7 |
| Weekends only | 14 | 11.7 |
| During examination only | 56 | 46.7 |
| Anytime | 36 | 30.0 |

Source: Field survey 2006

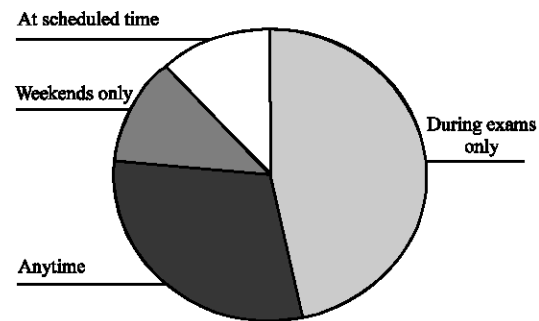


Fig. 1: Pie chart of children reading attitude

50% combined civil service and business. Larger percentage of the respondents (76%) mentioned that they have about 4-6 household members. Concerning family income, most of the respondents (42%) earned between ₦ 10,000-₦ 40,000 per month, only few of them earned below ₦ 10,000 (12%) and above ₦ 100,000 (18%).

This indicated that most of the parent had moderate number of household members but they were low income earners.

Table 2 and Pie chart in Fig. 1 showed that larger percentage (47%) of the parents said that their wards read during examination period while 30% mentioned that their wards read anytime, only few of the parents (12%) revealed that their wards read at scheduled time. This

Table 3: Reading facilities at home

| Variable | Frequency | (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|
| *Reading facilities | | |
| a) Home library | 12 | 10.0 |
| b) Textbooks | 84 | 70.0 |
| c) Reading table and chair | 18 | 15.0 |
| d) Computers | 8 | 6.7 |
| e) Novels | 10 | 8.4 |
| No response | 02 | 2.5 |

Source: Field survey 2006 *Multiple response

Table 4: Factors affecting their reading attitude at home

| Variable | Frequency | (%) |
|----------------------|-----------|------|
| Watching television | | |
| Every time | 59 | 49.2 |
| Sometime | 35 | 29.2 |
| Occasionally | 18 | 15.0 |
| Rarely | 8 | 6.7 |
| Household chores | | |
| Every time | 60 | 50.0 |
| Sometime | 36 | 30.0 |
| Occasionally | 15 | 12.5 |
| Rarely | 9 | 7.5 |
| Playing with friends | | |
| Every time | 46 | 38.3 |
| Sometime | 52 | 43.3 |
| Occasionally | 12 | 10.0 |
| Rarely | 10 | 8.4 |

Source: Field survey 2006

information implies that most children only read when they are about to sit for examinations and not to improve their reading habit.

Concerning availability of reading facilities at home (Table 3), most parents (70%) bought school textbooks for their children to read, about 15% of the parents made reading table and chairs available for their children while only 10% had well established library at home. In order to enhance their reading, very few of the parents (7%) mentioned that they bought novels and 8% said they made computer available for them. It could be seen that reading facilities were not adequately provided at home.

In Table 4, parents pointed out some factors that influenced the reading attitude of their wards at home. About 49% of the parents mentioned that their wards watched television every time, only 7% rarely watched television. On household chores, 50% of the parents said that their wards got involved with household chores every time. Some of the children play with their friends everytime (38%), about 10% play occasionally. This survey is in line with the work of Kaufman (2007) who reported that television and video entertainment could have negative influence on children reading culture, if not well monitored by parents/guardians. High involvement of children in household chores and playing also reduce their reading time.

Parents contribution to reading habit of their children was described in Table 5, about 45 % of the parents monitored their children when reading and doing

Table 5: Parents' contribution to the reading attitudes of their children

| Variable | (%) |
|--|------|
| *Parents' ways of assisting their children to read | |
| Register them in public library | 7.5 |
| Schedule time for reading | 12.0 |
| Monitor them when reading | 45.0 |
| Buy novels for them | 8.4 |
| Read to them | 18.3 |
| Allow them to read in family gathering | 20.0 |
| Reduce their house chores | 22.5 |
| Limit their playing time | 38.3 |
| Limit their television time | 30.0 |
| Set rules and regulations | 22.5 |
| How often do Parents assist children | |
| Every time | 20.0 |
| Sometime | 25.0 |
| Occasionally | 50.0 |
| Rarely | 5.0 |
| *Problem faced by parents | |
| Lack of facilities | 30.0 |
| Lost of concentration by the children | 70.0 |
| Environmental Problems | 81.6 |
| Lack of time | 22.5 |

Source: Field survey 2006, *Multiple responses

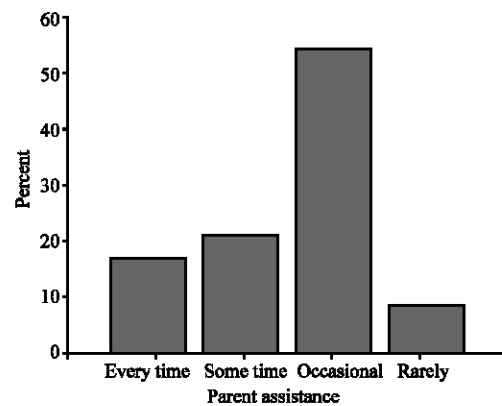


Fig. 2: Bar chart of how often the parents assisted their children

assignments, 38 % limited their children playing time, 30% limited their time to watch television, 23% set rules and regulations to improve the reading habit of their children, 23% reduced their household chores and 20% allowed them to read in any family gathering. Few percentages of the parents (8%) provided novels for their children. From these presentations, it could be seen that only few parents contributed positively to the improvement of their children reading habits.

About 20% of the parents assisted their children to read every time while most of the parents (50%) said that they assisted occasionally. This is shown in Table 5 and Bar chart in Fig. 2. The major problems faced by parents concerning their children reading attitudes were rightly indicated in Table 5. They are environmental problems (82%), loss of concentration (70%), lack of facilities (30%) and lack of time (23%).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the survey, it is quite obvious that most children are not exposed to good reading condition and materials that can stimulate them to develop better reading culture or habit. There is little or no monitoring from parents, some of the parents just assist in doing home works which is purely academics. Reading facilities are not available and the family income is not enough to acquire more reading materials. Children spend most of their free time watching television, playing with friends and doing household chores. In order to reduce these problems and motivate children to read, Parents/guardian should note the following recommendations:

- Spend more time with their children and be a role model (in reading) to them.
- Buy novels for their children especially during their birthdays.
- Regulate their activities and do not overburden them with much responsibilities so that they can have free time for reading.
- Endeavour to provide conducive environment for reading to the children.
- Allow them to read load and clear at any opportunity.
- Encourage them to read by planning a reading competition among them and if possible tag it with prize.
- Register them in public library and also on internet for any reading programme or competition.

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