

Home and School Factors as Determinants of Acquisition Rate of Reading Skill among Primary Education Pupils in Nigeria

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The study determined the extent to which some home and school factors influence the acquisition rate of reading skill of Nigerian primary school pupils. Three pertinent questions were raised and answered in the project. The study adopted *ex-post facto* survey design as there was no direct control or manipulation of the variables. The sample comprises of one thousand and eighty (1080) pupils who were randomly selected from two states of the federation. The pupils' parents, head teachers and class teachers were also involved in the project. Two validated instruments prepared by the researcher were used for the project. The results showed that the six variables contributed 53% altogether to the prediction of acquisition rate of reading skill among the pupils. The pupils': teacher ratio however made the largest contribution of 17.0%; followed by parents' education attainment 9.1%; learning resources available at school 8.06, school location 7.6, parents' occupation 5.8% and educational facilities available at home 5.5% in that order. Recommendations for viable counseling packages aimed at improving acquisition rate of reading skill among pupils in Nigeria were given to stake holders including parents, teachers and education policy makers.

Keywords: Reading, Reading Habit, Acquisition Rate, Home and School Factors.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is generally acknowledged as one of the most effective ways the knowledge base of any nation can be increased. Nations that read well, rule the world, as much valuable information are documented in texts. Reading is only access to it. Reading according to Hornby (2000) means to look at and understand the meaning of written or printed words or symbol. It can also be seen as a unique human activity that is characterized by the translation of symbols or letters into words and sentences that communicate information and mean something to the reader. The reader seeks to understand the meaning of a

written text; evaluates its significance and uses it to enhance personal knowledge, effective or pleasure. Ability to read makes one an erudite, and to the nation, a developed country. Reading does not have age barrier. In fact, reading takes place from cradle to the grave.

Every child is supposed to be fully competent in reading to succeed in school and discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a country. Reading is the foundation of much enjoyment in life and is closely related to vocational efficiency. Pupils, students and employees in every field must read to keep abreast of

what is happening in their fields. They must rely on written or digital words to convey information and data. Ability to read well is absolutely critical to success in life.

Ogbonna (2013) described reading as the only form of entertainment that is also an essential life skill. Reading is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years or else the child will not read well (poor reading habit).

Poor reading habit develops in a child when that child knows how to read, but was not supported to reach a full potential as a reader. Many things can be responsible for decline in reading skill. Among them are technological advancements that have brought about overall changes in homes, social and economic conditions. Poor reading habits occur in children and adults because reading, in African countries, are not considered a relevant leisure activity as it cannot be compared with interactive activity on the internet. Nigeria is one of the African countries characterized by poor reading habit.

Child up-brining is not a one man's job. It is a contributory responsibility of the family, school and the society, no wonder the popular saying that a child is for everybody and "The seed of indiscipline is planted at home, watered in the school and harvested by the society.

It is quite unfortunate that many parents are not exposed to the hidden treasures in reading. Many parents are willing to spend more money on junk food than to buy educating materials for their children. The few that few that are willing to buy, spend more money on school textbooks and not too much money on story books and comics for children. The child gets a lot of exposure, understands his culture and his environment when literary books are read.

Reading culture can be imparted in children early enough through lullaby, songs, toys, music, and choice of television programs, use of libraries, resource center, and book clubs. The school management should plan that information skills be taught in primary schools. Information skill includes all the techniques pupils can use to find information for themselves. These skills can be divided into selecting, locating and using information. Selecting and locating information involves being aware of different libraries and other sources of information, and ability to use a library well.

A pupil needs to understand the knowledge classification system, be able to use different types of catalogues, be able to locate the appropriate shelf and be able to identify a book or other type of information source by its title or subject. Being able to use the information effectively is as important as finding it. Once pupils have found the appropriate information in a book using contents and index pages, they will need to make a plan of work, devise appropriate questions, pick out the main facts and ideas, make notes, organize the materials and write up the notes. Again, if pupils are trained to use

information skills, they can develop the ability to direct their own learning so that they become lifelong learners. This training can be acquired via home, school, society and other factors.

A critical survey of literature has shown that some home and school variables such as parents occupational background (Idowu, 1991; Odinko2002) parents' educational attainment (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Rogan 1998; Lawani 2004), educational facilities available at home (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Ndukwe 2002) School physical surrounding (George 2010; Grant 2005; Marsden 2005; Bello2011), learning resources available at school (Ayodele &Folayajo, 2001) and teacher pupils' ratio (Ogunwuyi 2000; Okpala, Onocha, Ayodele & Folayajo 2001). Play an important role in the academic achievement of pupils and could thus positively influence the retention and possibly increase the acquisition rate of reading skill among primary school pupils. However, to the best knowledge of this researcher, no previous studies had identified the order and strengths of the interaction between the identified home and school variables on acquisition rate of reading skill among primary education pupils in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It was observed that, at the university levels Nigerian students still struggle with reading skill acquisition. This led to their total dependence on teachers note for their academic success. Poor performance is always the result which is not healthy for individual and national development. There is therefore, a need to introduce and monitor reading skill at primary school level. This will enhance learning that will have lasting effects on the individual and the society at large. The study sought to determine the extent to which some home (parents' occupation, parents' educational attainment, educational facilities available at home and school factors including school location, learning resources available at school and teacher-pupil ratio) provide explanation for acquisition rate of reading skill among primary education pupils in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study provided answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent would the home and school factors when taken together predict acquisition rate of reading skill among primary education pupils in Nigeria?
2. What is the relative contribution of each of the factors to the prediction?
3. What are the significant pathways through which the factors cause variation in acquisition rate of reading skill among primary school pupils?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted an ex-post facto design as there was no direct control or manipulation of the variables.

Population: The target population comprises all primary six pupils in the Nigerian public elementary schools.

Sample: A multiple-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the research. A total number of one thousand and eighty (1080) pupils together with their parents, head teachers and class teachers were randomly selected for the research. Thirty-six schools from two states of the federation (Plateau and Kwara) were purposely selected based on the following criteria:

- i. The schools must be public (Government) schools and must have reached primary six.
- ii. The schools must have been presenting pupils for common entrance examination for the last five years.

Letter was personally delivered to these schools requesting for their participation in the project.

Instruments:

Two main instruments used for the study are:

1. School factors Questionnaire(SFQ)
2. Pupils Home Background Questionnaire (PHBQ)

School Factors Questionnaire (SFQ)

This questionnaire sought information from head teachers and primary six teachers. In section A, respondents were to state the class taught, the location of their schools whether urban or semi-urban, number of pupils in their classes, teachers' qualification and years of teaching experience. In section B, a list of the different types of teaching resources was provided. They were to indicate whether they were available or not available and to indicate the quantity available. In section C, they supplied the information of the primary six pupils that acquired reading skill for the past five years.

Scoring of SFQ

In the teaching -learning resources, items available are scored 2 while those not available were scored 1.

Validation of SFQ

SFQ was administrated to 20 primary six teachers outside the sample size and the cronbach alpha was

computed to determine its reliability and internal consistency. The standardized alpha value obtained was 0.696, which implied that the instrument was reliable.

Pupils' Home Background Questionnaire (PHBQ)

The PHBQ sought general information about the pupils' class, gender and ages in section A. in section B, the parents' educational background options were listed and pupils were expected to tick the correct ones for their parents.

These include: no formal education, primary education, secondary education, Grade II, certificate /O.N.D. /N.C.E., H.N.D/First Degree/Masters Degree/PhD, others specify. In section C, a list showing the different categories of occupations of the parents was listed.

These includes housewives, artisan (carpenter, bricklayer, tailoring etc.), trading /business, civil service/teaching/officers in the force/private sector employers etc. in section D, various educational facilities at home were listed. Pupils were expected to provide information whether these resources were available or not available in their various homes. These resources include: books(library), Newspapers, magazines, Radio, Television, Audio CD/VCD, Video Machine, Computer Games, Internet, Others.

Scoring of PHBQ

In section B of PHBQ, the different parents' educational background were scored as follows: no formal education, 1; primary education, 2; secondary education, 3; Grade II certificate/OND/NCE, 4; HND/First Degree/Masters Degree/PhD, 5. Section C of PHBQ was scored as follows: Housewife, 1; Artisans e.g. Carpentry, tailoring / farming, etc. 2; Trading / Business, 3; Civil Service/Teaching/Officers in the Force/Private Sector Employers (Bankers, Insurance etc., 4. In section D, Books/Newspapers/Magazines were Scored 1; Radio, 2; Television, 3; Audio CD/VCD/Video Machine (VCR), 4; Computer/Computer Games, 5; Internet, 6.

Validation of PHBQ

PHBQ was administrated to 20 primary six pupils in twenty different schools outside of the sampled area. The cronbach alpha was computed to determine its reliability and internal consistency. The standardized alpha value obtained was 0.724, which implied that the instrument was reliable.

Data collection and Analysis

The instruments were administered directly to the subjects by the investigator and his research assistance. Data collection lasted for four weeks. Data analysis

involved basic descriptive statistics like frequencies, means and percentages to quantify each of the variables. Multiple regression of a stepwise procedure was also used to answer the questions. Furthermore, structural equations based on temporal order and experiences of the research were formulated to guide the running of the regression, so as to get the standardized partial (path) coefficient.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Questions one:

To what extent would the home and school factors taken together predict acquisition rate of pupils reading skill?

Table 1 shows the result of the regression of the six homes and school variables on *acquisition rate of pupils reading skill*

From the table 1, the multiple correlation of all the six variables with the acquisition rate is .728 giving a R^2 (**R square**) of .530. The six variables when taken together could therefore explain 53.0% of the variance in *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. This shows that there are several other important factors which may or not be school and /or home factors that are also responsible for *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. The six variables in this study, nevertheless are contributing as much as 53% altogether to the prediction of *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. The remaining 47% source of variation in acquisition rate could be from other variables like peer group influence (Adebusuyi 2002), head teacher's quality (Obanya and Okpala 1984) frequency of parents 'teachers' association (PTA) meeting (UBE,2002), e.t.c which these scholars asserted to have so much influence on pupils achievement in primary school.

Research Question Two: What is the relative contribution of each of the variables to the prediction?

From table 1, it can be seen that each of the variables contributes significantly to the *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. Parents Occupation (X_1) is contributing 0.058 equivalents of 5.8% to the variance in acquisition rate of the reading skill of the pupils Though in the stepwise analysis of the multiple correlations, the variable was taken last, it is still singularly contributing a little more than educational facilities at home(X_3).

Parents education attainment (X_2) is contributing 0.091 (91%) to the variance in acquisition rate. An educational facility at home (X_3) is having a singular contribution of

0.055 (i.e. 5.50%) to the prediction of *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. The contribution from this variable relatively is the least among all the six variables considered in this study.

School location (X_4) as a variable is contributing a variance of 7.6% (0.076) to the *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. The learning resources available in respective school (X_5) is also having a singular contribution of 0.08 (8%) on the *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. It can be seen that the learning resources provided by the school is even more important than the location of the school concerning *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. The pupil-teacher ratio (X_6) is having the largest contribution 17.0% relatively to the rate at which pupil acquire reading skill. Conversely from the standard partial coefficient this large

Contribution is in the negative direction. The bigger the rate, the less the pupils *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*.

Research Question Three: what is the significant pathways through which the variables cause variation in the acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill?

Table 2 shows the Multiple Regressions of the Intra-Relationship among the home and school variables while Table 3 shows the paths and paths coefficient among the variables. The standard partial coefficients of the six homes and school variables in respect of the acquisition rate (shown in table) are included in table 3 as equivalence of standard paths coefficients (B).

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of the study reveal the degree of the influence which some home and school factors exert on *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill* in Nigeria. These revelations have implication for parents, practicing teachers as well as policy makers as highlighted below:

Parents

The result of this research has shown a positive link between parent occupations, parent educational attainment as well as educational facilities at home and *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. Parent should therefore make effort to improve educational status as the case may be. Informed parents are more likely to assist their children in overcoming confusion and frustration brought about in the school programme. Parents should seek and receive sufficient information and opportunities to share with their children. Parents should also keep in touch with their children teachers regularly and attend parents meeting and open day as

Table 1: The stepwise regression of home and school variables with acquisition rate of pupils reading skill.

| | Independent variables | Multiple R | R ² | Singular Contribution | Standard Partial Coefficient | F-Ratio |
|---|-----------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | X ₆ | .412 | .170 | .170 | -.462 | 102.30 |
| 2 | X ₂ | .511 | .261 | .091 | .141 | 164.54 |
| 3 | X ₅ | .584 | .341 | .080 | .104 | 56.92 |
| 4 | X ₄ | .646 | .417 | .076 | .464 | 48.50 |
| 5 | X ₃ | .687 | .472 | .055 | .154 | 111.34 |
| 6 | X ₁ | .728 | .530 | .058 | 0.34 | 76.01 |

KEY/NOTE: The variables are parents' occupation (X₁), parents' educational attainment(X₂), and educational facilities available at home(X₃), and school location (X₄). Others are learning resources available at school (X₅), and teacher-pupil ratio (X₆).

Table 2: multiple regressions showing the Intra-Relationship among the home and school variables.

| Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | Multiple R | R ² | B | B | F |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------|-------|--------|
| X ₃ | X ₁ | .447 | .200 | .0184 | -.007 | 20.48 |
| | X ₂ | .543 | .295 | .041 (49.786) | -.011 | 101.12 |
| X ₄ | X ₁ | .416 | .173 | -.1835 | .213 | 45.73 |
| | X ₂ | .529 | .280 | .0313 (22.756) | .113 | 79.33 |
| X ₅ | X ₄ | .467 | .218 | -.4301 | .154 | 12.22 |
| | X ₆ | .602 | .362 | .2600 (94.958) | .229 | 1.865 |
| X ₆ | X ₄ | .066 | .004 | -.0489 (68.002) | .029 | 20.48 |

well as other school functions as when invited. They should ask their children question about school on a daily basis and assist them in their school work.

Educators

Educators should be parents friendly, they should arrange activities such as orientation visit for parents and children, provide parents with verbal and writing

Table 3: The paths and paths coefficient among the variables

| Paths | Standard Paths Coefficient | Significance (>0.05) |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| P ₇₁ | .034 | Not significant |
| P ₇₂ | .141 | Significant |
| P ₇₃ | .154 | Significant |
| P ₇₄ | .464 | Significant |
| P ₇₅ | .104 | Significant |
| P ₇₆ | -.462 | Significant |
| P ₃₁ | -.007 | Not significant |
| P ₃₂ | -.0011 | Not significant |
| P ₄₁ | .213 | Significant |
| P ₄₂ | .113 | Significant |
| P ₅₄ | .154 | Significant |
| P ₅₆ | .229 | Significant |
| P ₆₄ | .025' | Not significant |

information about school, provide opportunities for parents to be familiar with the staff, organizing social event that could involve parents, teachers and children before and after commencement of school. Educators should also make the school rich in play materials and ensure that the school environment is attractive and conducive to learning.

Policy Makers

The fact that the class size, availability of learning resources as well as school location have some casual influence on *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill* has major implications for educational policy makers and administrators.

The smaller the class to a teacher, the more the *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. So also, the more the learning environment is conducive stimulating and attractive to children the more they would like to remain in school. It is therefore recommended that accreditation/monitoring teams should ensure strict adherence to specified requirement in terms of class size, availability of play materials etc. in the primary school. There is also the need for continuous monitoring of primary school programmes to ensure psychologically stimulating environment for pupils in order to encourage better *acquisition rate of pupils' reading skill*. This in essence would promote the goals and objectives of universal basic education programme in Nigeria.

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