

Original Research Report

Availability and Utilization of Reading Resources in Homes for Effective Learning among Primary School Children

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Abstract: The study investigated the availability of reading resources and the extent of utilization of these resources for effective learning among primary school children in Nsukka Educational Zone of Enugu State. It also assessed the utilization of modeled reading behavior in early reading activities of school children. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, and the instrument used for data collection was Pupils' Home Reading Environment Scale (PHRES). The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed that most primary school pupils do not have access to reading resources while participating in learning activities at home, and children are exposed to poor modeled reading behavior. Based on the findings, it was recommended that there is a need to improve the awareness of parents on the need to provide adequate reading resources by improving parents' awareness programmes towards this effort.

Keywords: Availability, Children, Home, Reading-Resources, Utilization, Primary School.

1. Introduction

Home environment generally is referred to the family background of the child which includes all human and material resources present in the home that affects child living. Home environment have been shown to be a major factor that influences the intellectual development of children (Khan, Begum & Imad 2019). Within the home, children learn early interactions with the members of their family as they use interactive resources provided by parents such as television, story books, toys, stimulating objects, and play materials among others. Gillion (2012) state that learning development begins early in life and it is a very important phase that lays the pathway for subsequent intellectual development and social adjustments for school children. The Nigerian Children Rights Act (2003) note that childhood period generally refers to the period from birth till the age of twelve which comprises of toddlers, preschool and school children. The National Policy on Education (2014) categorized them into early childhood the period between one and five years of age, including both the toddler and pre-school years and late childhood the period between six to twelve years of age which is the school age. At this stage, children depend on their parent to provide them with basic needs and resources.

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Resources in the home relates to those interactive objects or materials provided in the home environment by the family members. They refer to objects ready for use if or when needed for educational/learning pleasure or benefit (NTI 2004). Such resources could be viewed, perceived, touched, felt or chewed. Put differently, the home reading resources are those materials or objects in the home that attract the sensory organs for the intellectual development of the child which invariably enhances learning ability. Baker and Scher (2002) aver that children whose parents had positive beliefs about reading for pleasure had higher access to reading materials and are more motivated to read. Children's interaction with interactive resources in the home seems to be determined by the availability of those resources (Biedinger, 2011). Some parents provide basic interactive resources to enhance children's play and learning while others do not. Thus, availability of these resources in the home seems to be critical indicators for increased intellectual development of children and to equally inculcate right educational values in other to ensure continuity for future learning outcomes (Igba, 2009). Homes that are rich with these resources are bound to produce children who are keen to learn through textual materials compared to their counterparts who do not have such opportunity. But it is not the availability of these resources alone that guarantees effective performance in school but their adequacy and effective utilization (Blunt, 1990).

Baker and Scher (2002) found children exposed to early reading more likely to know the alphabet, read or pretend to read, and write their own name. Reading at this early childhood stage relies principally on memory of the story and willingness to perform, interpret and invent, based on what they have heard and recall. At this stage also the pupils perform better in word reading than in comprehension (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy. 2007). Access to reading resources involves the provision of storybooks, frequency of library visits and number of books available in the home library. Sénéchal and Lefevre (2002) concur that the availability of reading materials and parental involvement in the child's reading and writing activities at home has a stimulating and motivating effect on reading and writing ability of the children. Likewise, the availability of these materials also initiates the urge to use the material by children in the home thereby increasing the ability to learn.

Lopez (2011) aver that when parents provide reading resources to engage their children, the pupils are more likely to develop positive attitudes to reading than in children whose parents do not provide such reading resources. Despite these facts, most homes in the study area lack these facilities.

Invariably, this could make school children from such homes not to respond adequately or sometimes responding incomprehensively to classroom teaching because their home environment has not exposed them to the kinds of materials used in schools. If home environment is not intellectually stimulating, some school children may find it difficult to cope in school and may eventually dropout of school.

According to Burgess (2002) it has also been discovered that many factors equally contribute to the quality of reading such as linguistic, interactions, access to resources and learning experiences with parents. Soweto (2020) revealed that the underfunded nature of public education and commercialisation in Nigeria have led to poor learning performances. These poor performances among primary school pupils are definitely carried on to the later classes because it is known that learning is cumulative. It has also been noted that learning facilities such as reading resources play a crucial part in the teaching-learning process by making it more engaging (Olanipekun & Aina, 2014; Owan, 2012). However, despite the steady growth in child enrolment, learning outcomes indicate that majority of Nigerian children were not acquiring basic literacy and numerical skills which are both foundational and necessary for future learning (World Bank Report, 2021).

Britto, Brooks-Gunn and Griffin (2006) concur that early reading experiences lead to school readiness and greater subsequent success in reading. Furthermore, Mullis et al. (2007) state that early home reading exposure, including activities and reading resources are found to have longer-lasting effects on understanding of vocabulary in the context and attitudes of school children. Growing up in an impoverished home without reading exposure has numerous implications for the successful intellectual development of children.

Children could also develop reading skills and learn important information about reading when they actively participate and interact with people and materials in and around the home environment. They naturally learn sounds and sound structure and how to organize speech sounds according to the pattern characteristics of their native language as a predisposition to acquiring spoken language (Lundberg, 2009). The patterns of sound structure enable children to form words and understand how to use them. The knowledge that words are constructed from sounds facilitates the development of phonological awareness which is a pre-condition for reading acquisition in an alphabetic language system (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004). Hence the acquisition of reading skills by school children could result from social interaction between older people and reading materials in the home environment. The study investigated the availability and utilization of reading resource in the home environment on school children.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Although there is a global as well as national awareness of the importance of home reading resources on primary school children academic achievement particularly in early reading. There appears to be poor home reading resources available to majority of school children in Nsukka Education zone which may result in lack of effective or adequate early reading and writing skills. This makes children affected by this to be less involved in class activities due to inferiority complex and eventually culminate into low academic achievement which in turn culminates in low performance especially at the unity exams and later in examinations such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC). Critically, the lack of adequate reading and writing skills may be related to poor early instruction, utilization and inadequate home reading resources. Poor awareness and knowledge on the need for these resources may be prevalent among parents within the study area which may be as a result of poor education, socio-economic situation and occupational demands that

affect their ability to provide educational resources for the children.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate the availability and utilization of reading resources in homes for effective learning among primary school children in Enugu state. Specifically, the study sought to identify the:

- (a) availability of reading resources for primary school children in homes.
- (b) utilization of reading resources for primary school children in homes.
- (c) extent of pupils utilisation through model reading behaviour of their parents.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- (a) What is the extent of availability of reading resources for primary pupils' at homes in Nsukka Education Zones?
- (b) What is the extent of utilization of reading resources for learning at homes among primary pupils in Nsukka Education Zones?
- (c) What is the extent of pupils' utilization of reading resources through modelled reading behaviour of their parents in Nsukka Education Zones?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design of the Study

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. To achieve this, the survey method was adopted and the quantitative data were generated using the questionnaire. The survey was considered most suitable for this study because surveys are highly useful in the field of social/behavioural science and areas that involve human action (Okoro 2004; Osuala, 2001).

2.1.1. Ethics and Approval of Research

The study was approved by the faculty research ethics review committee. Information about the study, consent and assent forms was appropriately distributed. The approval for conducting the research was obtained by the authors from their primary school institutions. Also, the consent of the parents of the participants was sought and approved through the respective principals of the primary schools. The participants also gave their assent. The researchers also complied with the ethical requirements for human subject research.

2.2. Area of the Study

This study was conducted in primary schools located in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria which is made up of twenty communities. The study focused on government approved and registered primary schools within the area of study.

2.3. Population and Sample

The population for the study is 175835. This population includes all males and females enrolled into public and private primary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area. A basic sample size of 384 was drawn using the online sample size calculator of Wimmer and Dominick using a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5.0%. 384 respondents were approximated to 400 respondents. Three questionnaires were not returned.

Sample for the study were a representative sample of 397 pupils which included 179 males and 218 females and one of their parents, randomly selected. The pupils were selected from 12 primary schools in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.

The multi stage sampling technique was used in sampling. First the purposive sampling

technique was used to select Nsukka Local Government Area. The selection was based on the fact that the Nsukka possessed the qualities of having majority of the children living with their parents who had basic education due to the preponderance of primary schools within the area. Next the cluster sampling was used to divide the primary schools into private and public. Last, the simple random sampling was used to administer the questionnaire to primary schools pupils and parents that fulfill the required criteria.

Among the inclusion criteria was the school's approval to enable the researchers collect the necessary data from the participants, participant's parents providing informed consent, the participant's availability and willingness to avail themselves on the spot to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researchers. Thus, an exclusion criterion was implied when students or their schools did not meet any one of the inclusion criteria.

2.4. Instrument for Data Collection and Study Procedure

The instrument for data collection was 27 items questionnaire. The instrument was divided into section 'A' for demographic data with 5 items, section 'B' for psychographic data of the pupils with 22 items. The instrument was validated by three experts, one from Home Economics and Hospitality Management, one from Education Foundations and one from Art Education, all from University of Nigeria Nsukka. The instrument used in data collection was the questionnaire adapted from Home Experiences - Pupils Home Reading Environment Scale PHRES. In the questionnaire there were 28 items on parents' response question and 22 items on pupil's response were captured.

Twenty copies of the instrument were trial tested twice using the test-retest method on twenty pupils in primary schools and their parents in Igboeze south local government. These pupils were noted to possess the characteristics required. After explaining and administering the questionnaire on the pupils they were asked to take the questionnaire to their parents at home. In cases where the parents of the students were not forthcoming, one of the researchers made the effort to meet the available parent and explain more to the parent. In some cases the instrument was administered, read, answered and thereafter collected on the spot.

To measure reliability or the degree of consistency, the Cronbach Alpha statistical method was utilized which returned an internal consistency coefficient of 0.861. This was considered high enough which indicated the reliability of the instrument which would generate the needed data. Some of the respondents had the questions read and explained to them in their mother tongue for proper comprehension. The first to be presented are the social demographic characteristics of the respondents. This is followed by the substantive issues of the research.

2.5. Data Collection Technique

The instrument was administered, read and interpreted to the pupils using their mother tongue before they were allowed to respond to the option and thereafter collected on the spot.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Research questions were answered using mean scores while standard deviation was used to determine the closeness or otherwise of the opinions of the respondents from the group mean. Items were measured in a 4 point scale that required the participants to rate the extent based on the following; 1 = very low extent (VLE), 2 = low extent (LE), 3 = high extent (HE), 4 = very high extent (VHE). To handle the quantitative analysis, relevant key questions among the research questions relating to the study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23. Decision rule for the mean adopted for this study was; $>$ or $= 2.5$ was accepted while < 2.5 was rejected. The data collected were explained utilizing the explanation-building technique.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Research question one:* What is the extent of availability of reading resources for primary pupils' at homes in Nsukka Education Zones?

Table 1: Mean analysis of extent of availability of reading resources.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	There is children dictionary in the home	2.31	0.89	LE
2.	Television has educational channels at home	3.22	0.82	HE
3.	There are alphabet books at home	3.31	0.81	HE
4.	There are books with poems in my home	2.43	0.92	LE
5.	There are children's magazines regularly at home	2.03	0.98	LE
6.	There are magnetic letter(s) cards most times at home	1.98	0.87	VLE
7.	There is a special reading place/library at home	2.33	0.90	LE

Very Low Extent (VLE), Low Extent (LE), High Extent (HE), Very High Extent (VHE).

3.2. *Research question two:* What is the extent of utilization of reading resources at homes among primary pupils in Nsukka Education Zones?

Table 2: Mean analysis of extent of utilization of reading resources at homes.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
8.	Visiting the home library	1.49	0.62	VLE
9.	Using children's picture dictionary	2.28	0.88	LE
10.	viewing the educational channel	2.34	0.76	LE
11.	read and listen to rhyming story from children's books	3.08	0.89	HE
12.	Use magnetic letters to form words	2.45	0.76	LE
13.	write note or little story from the books at home	2.43	0.76	LE
14.	read books/newspaper/magazine	3.23	0.89	HE

Very Low Extent (VLE), Low Extent (LE), High Extent (HE), Very High Extent (VHE)

3.3. *Research question three:* What is the extent of pupils utilization of reading resources through modelled reading behaviour of their parents?

Table 3: Mean analysis of extent of utilization through modeled reading behavior.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
15.	I listen to storybook from my parents	1.98	0.87	VLE
16.	I participate with my parents when they read	1.82	0.67	VLE
17.	I listen to books my parents read to me	1.87	0.68	VLE
18.	I use phone/computer to play reading games with my parents.	2.34	0.98	LE
19.	My parent illustrates non-fiction children's books to me	2.03	0.77	LE
20.	My parents read out loud while reading with me	3.42	0.86	HE
21.	I learn how to spell words from my parents	2.76	0.97	LE
22.	Usually my parents stop reading and point out pictures that show what was told in the story to me	3.28	0.89	HE

Very Low Extent (VLE), Low Extent (LE), High Extent (HE), Very High Extent (VHE)

Results in Table 1 revealed that two out of the seven items that is items 2 and 3 had their

mean values ranged from 3.22-3.31 which were within the real limit of 2.50 with benchmark for 4 point scale. This indicates that the reading resources are available in the home. The high mean response values indicate the strength of the availability of resources that enhance reading in the home. However, four items (1, 4, 5 and 7) had their mean values ranged from 2.31-2.34 below the benchmark and one item had its mean range value at 1.98 indicating that the respondents maintained that reading resource are scarce in the home. This result align with the findings of Mullis, Marl, Kennedy and Toy (2007) which maintained that availability of resources aid understanding of vocabulary in the context and attitude of school children. Furthermore, the result is consistent Baker and Scher (2002) who found that availability of reading resources at home makes school children's to know the alphabets and read more than their counterparts.

Table two results above revealed that two items (19 and 22) out of seven items had their mean values ranging from 3.08 – 3.23 which were within the set benchmark. This indicates that the respondents agree that utilization of reading resources in the home can help their reading early in schools. However, 4 items (17, 18, 20 and 21) had their mean values ranged from 2.28 - 2.45 below the benchmark and item (16) far below the bench mark with a mean of (1.49) This indicates that the respondents had low participation in utilising reading resources in early reading. This agrees with the findings of Lundberg (2009) and Anthony and Lonigan (2004) in which both assert that sound structure and organization of speech which children learn through participation and utilization enable them to form words which are among the conditions for reading acquisition. Thus, the contribution of pupils participation in reading activities to the development of early reading are found because the variables are associated with what the children can do with the help of parents or older siblings. Even though school children may have been exposed to the school environment for four years, there remains a lasting effect of their early childhood reading experiences on their attitudes toward reading.

Table three revealed that (13 and 15) had their values ranged from 3.28 -3.42 which were within the benchmarks. This indicates that the respondents to a high extent agreed that their parents' exposure to modelled reading behaviours at home increased their reading with reading resources in the home. On the other hand, two items (11 and 12) had their mean ranged from 2.03 -2.34 which indicates low exposure where as 3 items (8, 9 and 10) had their mean values ranged from 1.82-1.98 which is far below the benchmark. This indicates that the respondents attested that their parents do not expose them to modelled reading behaviour at home, thus, do not view exposure to modelled reading behaviour as an aspect of learning that could improve, reading. This conformed to the lack of adequate reading resource environment noted in the homes among a major segment of the sample. The finding agrees with the postulation of Burgess (2002) which maintained that parent-child behaviours, interactions, maternal responsiveness and joint attention enhance children's ability to read and comprehend. This confirms that parents' value of reading, exhibited by their reading behaviours, expose their children to early reading. In turn the activities that make up the reading resource in the home environment help to prepare children with early learning skills necessary to enhance the early reading in school. Enhanced learning skills including basic level of education will spur and help children perform at higher levels of their education across school subjects.

One of the implications of this study is that parents and teachers must keep in mind that all school children come to the classroom with different levels of reading skills from different home with different reading resources available at home. It is important that parent should make reading resources available and equally see to the utilization of such, to help shape their children early

learning experiences (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). The present study has some limitations. Despite our findings many educationists might argue that the role of teachers in improving the general academic performance of pupils may exert more influence than the availability and utilization of reading resources which limits the contribution made by the current study. Critically, demographic characteristics, such as environment, accommodation, socioeconomic status, and cultural background, were not included, which might affect the generalization of the results. Further limitations involve the lack of data on variables such as occupation of parents, strictness, discipline, play time, peer group influence and role models for the pupil may influence the desire by spurring or reducing the desire for further education among pupils in Enugu State. Future studies should endeavor to examine these and other correlations which were not used in this study both in Nigeria and in other countries.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the study point to mainly low extent on both the availability and utilization of reading resources in the homes of pupils within Nsukka Local Government Area. Even more so is that there exists Very Low Extent of utilization of reading resources through modelled reading behaviour of pupils parents. It was hypothesized that success in reading begins with support in the home, as measured by parents' attitudes toward reading, parents' own reading behaviors, reading resources and the availability of reading resources for children in the home. A supportive home environment can help prepare school children for school, based on parents' support through making available reading resources, exposure of the children to modeled reading behaviors at home and allowing the children to participate in learning activities that will enhance early reading. Based on the foregoing, it becomes imperative that parent awareness programmes should be created to teach parents how to provide rich learning resources at home for their children. This can be organized through using Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) as a platform so as to involve most parents. It is necessary to create parent awareness programmes in prints and on televisions to teach parents how to provide rich learning experiences for their children at home using a rich base of affordable learning resources and materials. Stakeholders and the government can aid in providing or subsidize the costs involved in provision of home learning resources.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest,

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: ABE, UHO, JOO, RCE.

Formal analysis: ABE, RCE, UHO, JOO.

Funding acquisition: ABE, UHO, RCE, JOO.

Investigation: ABE, JOO, RCE, UHO.

Methodology: ABE, UHO, JOO, RCE.

Writing – original draft, review & editing: ABE, UHO, JOO, RCE.

Data Availability Statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article. Further enquiries can be directed to the corresponding author

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