

Reading Habits On The Learners' Academic Performance In Literature; A Case Study Of Jinja Secondary School, Jinja City.

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the influence of reading habits on the learners' academic performance in literature; a case study of Jinja secondary school, Jinja city". The objectives were; to investigate the reading habits of students of Jinja Senior Secondary School, to find out the types of materials they read and their purposes for reading, to find out the perception of students on reading habits and academic performance in Literature and the factors that affect their reading habits. The study applied descriptive design that employed self-administered questionnaires, and semi- structured interviews. Validity of the instruments was determined by contacting the experts and supervisor of the researcher. Reliability was determined by using test-retest method. Multi-stage sampling technique, which involves simple random sampling, was used to arrive at the sample size of 131 respondents. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Packages of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5 while qualitative data was analyzed and presented thematically. From the findings, 74.8% of the respondents indicated patronizing the library, 67.2% visited the library to conduct research, 51.9% visited the library to do their assignment, 46.6% visit to seek for information, 45.0% visit the library to study to pass their exams, 37.4% visit to read for pleasure, 33.6% visit to read newspapers, 29.0% also go there to borrow story books whilst 6.9% visit there to access the internet respectively. With regards to what reference material that is available for consultation in the library 76.3% of the respondents said the only one at the library is a dictionary which is mostly consulted. Some of the respondents indicated they needed to be encouraged to develop love for reading, therefore It will be appropriate for the authorities to at least add one lesson to the time table as a reading lesson.

Key words: Reading Habits, Learners, Academic Performance and Literature

Background of the Study

The ability to cultivate and develop good reading habits allows a person to have the opportunity to expand their knowledge (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). For example, all elementary school subjects such as math, science, social studies, and even spelling require students to read. Rosenberg (2003) emphasized that a child's early exposure to books and literacy activities in early childhood allows them to understand the functions of print that manifest in literate behavior long before they formally learn to read. Such people also read faster with great ease than their counterparts who may have had no previous experience with books (Moses et al., 2023). Reading habits among students in general have

become a source of concern for many, including educators, who continue to complain about low standards in both writing and speaking in English. Reading also expands individuals' vocabulary and enables them to speak and write well (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). Reading attitudes lead to positive reading experiences, which also lead to higher academic achievement. People read for different reasons. Some read to find more information about an aspect of social life, some read to relieve boredom, some read to pass the time, and some also read to get specific information. For others, reading serves as a form of free time and a hobby. Others also read to gain

Received: 18.01.2024

Accepted: 22.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

knowledge to pass an exam (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023).

Reading is considered an essential tool for learning and is therefore important for every individual. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has therefore focused most of its activities on promoting reading among communities. For example, as early as 1972, UNESCO launched a program entitled "Books for All" to be implemented by member states to improve reading habits in different countries (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). The main purpose of the program was to promote and

Statement of the problem

The students' current problems such as poor performance in examinations as well as poor speaking and writing in English have been attributed to the lack of reading habits among them. Poor reading habits in secondary schools have become a matter of great concern to parents, government and educators in the country. In Uganda, the performance of students in writing U.N.E.B examinations in the country has been deteriorating for some time. This deterioration has been attributed to poor reading habits among students (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). For example, the report of the Executive Secretary of the Uganda National Examination Board for the 2017 and 2018 U.N.E.B examinations revealed a failure percentage of 31.19% and 19.15% respectively. . The report attributes poor performance to insufficient intensive and extensive reading, poor communication skills and insufficient comprehension of questions, poor spelling or spelling skills (Chief Examiner's Report 2013). The report recommended that students need to read a lot to expand their knowledge and improve their vocabulary (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022).

Another report by the Ugandan Education Commission in 2014 also indicated a decline in student achievement in English. Only 45.2% passed the subject to qualify for tertiary education, with 20.9% of exam takers gaining a Grade 9 in English in 2014. A literature review showed that research on reading habits in Uganda has focused on tertiary students and school pupils (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). For example, Afenyo (1999) studied the reading habits of undergraduate students at Makerere University; Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) studied the reading habits and academic performance of Koforidua Polytechnic students; and Adablah (1992) also studied the reading habits of teachers in selected sub-districts of the Kampala metropolitan area. Regarding pupils, Arthur (2006) investigated the reading habits of children in Kampala, while Brew (2006) studied the reading habits of children in private and public schools. No research has been found in the literature on reading habits and their effects on the academic performance of secondary school students in Uganda (Victoria et al., 2023) and it is against this background that the researcher intends to investigate reading habits and their effect on the academic performance of secondary school students in Jinja (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022).

Purpose of the Study

encourage reading habits among people around the world.

In most African countries, reading has generally been recognized as an academic exercise often associated with reading only textbooks that deal with core subject matter. Building reading habits among students in Uganda should be a concern of all stakeholders in the country (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). Rosenberg (2003) states that a reading nation is a winning nation and therefore efforts should be made to promote reading among students in the country.

Received: 18.01.2024

Accepted: 22.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

The purpose of this study was to investigate reading habits and its effects on academic performance of students at Jinja Senior Secondary School.

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the reading habits of students of Jinja Senior Secondary School.
2. To find out the types of materials they read and their purposes for reading
3. To find out the perception of students on reading habits and academic performance in Literature and the factors that affect their reading habits.

Literature Review

“Reading plays an important part in the daily lives of most people. People read road signs, maps, and labels on medicine bottles, fill out forms, apply for jobs and so on. The capability to perform such actions is occasionally referred to as functional reading or literacy. Learning to read is one of the main intellectual experiences that give the basis for a child’s future victory at school (Victoria et al., 2023). Reading is considered as a procedure, a way of reasoning and a sort of real experience which requires several complicated capabilities, the skill to discern printed words, to skim for information and then perhaps to read exhaustively (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). Uganda being a member of the UNESCO held a crusade for the promotion of good reading habits after UNESCO’s declaration of promoting reading worldwide. The campaign is to help improve reading habits in order to spread literacy among the people in the communities (Ntirandekura & Friday, 2022). According to Chettri and Rout (2013), reading is the beginning of a child’s education. The success or non-success of his educational life will depend to a larger scope upon his reading ability. It may be considered as a fundamental skill in the learning process and every effort should be made to develop it from infancy. Studies have also revealed that teachers do not have much control on children as parents do. A good reading habit has also been found to be imperative for a healthy academic development which also plays a critical role in allowing a person attain practical efficiency (Emmanuel et al., 2023).

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative survey method. Quantitative research involved collecting and analyzing numerical data and applying statistical text. It was a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. Relationships that exist among quantitative variables are usually depicted with graphs. Quantitative research was also a form of research in which the investigators use the correlational statistics to describe and measure the degree or association between two or more variables or sets of scores. The variables used can therefore be measured on instruments so that numerical data could be analyzed using statistical procedures. The population under studied were Forms 1, 2 and 3 students of Jinja Senior Secondary School in Jinja City. The total number of students is 1,893. The males constitute 1,017 and females 876. The study was carried out at Jinja Senior School in Jinja City. In order to obtain a representative sample for the data collection, a sample size of 7% of the total population of 1,893, that is 133 students of the Forms 1, 2 and 3 were selected for the study. This was based on Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) assertion that, a “sample should be as large as the researcher can obtain with a reasonable expenditure of time and energy” (p. 116). The 7% has been chosen because of the limited time available for the completion of the study. The papers were thoroughly stirred and 133 papers drawn out of the bowl individually (Thomas and Brubaker, 2000). The researcher chose to tick the

Received: 18.01.2024

Accepted: 22.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

133 numbers on the list and the students with those numbers were selected to participate in the study. The data collected was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Nelson et al., 2022). SPSS, a software package, presents the social scientist with a useful working language for data analysis. It had also been designed to make the system easily accessible to users with no prior computer experience.

RESULTS

Reading beyond class schedule

Table 1: Reading beyond class schedule

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	90	68.7
No	37	28.2
Non-response	4	3.1
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2023

It is therefore not surprising that when they asked to indicate whether they read after classes, Table 9 shows that majority of them (68.7%) indicated they do read. The implication of this finding is that, majority of the respondents do not depend solely on what is been taught in class but do some form of reading beyond what is taught in the class.

Frequency of reading

Table 2: Frequency of reading

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	82	62.6
Weekly	30	22.9
Once every two weeks	2	1.5
Monthly	11	8.4
Others (please specify)	4	3.1
Non-response	2	1.5
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2023

The respondents were also asked to indicate the frequency with which they read. Table 10 shows that majority of the

respondents (62.6%) read daily and 22.9% read weekly. Others are once a month and once every two weeks

Time spent per day in reading

Table 3: Time spent per day in reading

Hours spent in reading	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 to 2 hours	62	47.3
2 to 3 hours	36	27.5
3 to 4 hours	12	9.2
4 to 5 hours	10	7.6
Others (please specify)	11	8.4
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2023

The respondents were asked to indicate the time they spend reading per day. Table 11 shows that 47.3% read 1 to 2 hours a day and 27.5% read 2 to 3 hours a day. Others are 3 to 4 hours (9.2%) and 4 to 5 hours (7.6%).

Table 4: Type of storybooks read (Fiction or Novel)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Both	120	91.6
None	11	8.4
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2023

Number of books read per term

As a follow up, respondents were also asked to indicate the number of books they read per term. Table 13b shows that 17.6% read one book per term, 22.9% read two books, 27.5% read three books and 18.3% read four books per term.

Table 5: Number of books read per term

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
One book per term	23	17.6
Two books	30	22.9
Three books	36	27.5
Four books	24	18.3

Others	11	8.4
Non-response	7	5.3
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2023

Access to reading materials

The researcher then wanted to know how they access their reading materials. The respondents were asked to select the number of answers that apply. Table 14 shows that majority of the respondents (69.5%) borrow it from their friends, 57.3% purchase them, and 49.6% borrow them from the library. Others are from relatives (30.5%), and from the Public Library (8.4%). It can

be concluded that the sources of their reading materials are friends and the school library. Table 14: Access to reading materials

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Purchase	75	57.3
From Friends	91	69.5
From Relatives	40	30.5
From School Library	65	49.6
From Public Library	11	8.4

Others 2 1.5

Source: Field Study, 2023

PURPOSE FOR READING

The researcher then wanted to know from the respondents their purposes for reading. An option was given to the respondents to tick as many that apply.

Table 7: Reasons for reading

Response	Frequency	Percentage
To compliment my studies	52	39.7
To pass examination	66	50.4
For Pleasure	47	35.9
To acquire Knowledge	93	71.0

To improve my grades	55	42.0
To learn new things	92	70.2
To improve my vocabulary	87	66.4
To improve my spoken and written English	84	64.1
Others	8	6.1

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 7 shows the respondents mostly read to acquire knowledge (71.0%), learn new things (70.2%), improve on their vocabulary (66.4%), and improve on their verbal and written English. Others are to pass their examinations (50.4%) and to improve on their grades (42.0%). Only 35.9% of the respondents indicated they read for pleasure.

Enjoyment of reading

The respondents were asked to indicate how they feel when they engage in reading, whether they enjoy it very much, quite a lot, a bit, not much or not at all.

Table 8: Enjoying reading

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very much	83	63.4
Quite a lot	30	22.9
A bit	9	6.9
Not much	8	6.1
Not at all	1	0.8
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 8 shows that most of the respondents (63.4%) enjoy reading very much. This is followed by enjoy reading quite a lot (22.9%), a bit (6.9%), and not much (6.1%). Only 0.8% indicated they do not enjoy reading at all.

PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS READING HABITS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The study sought to find out from students whether reading has enhanced their academic performance, so they were asked if reading has actually enhanced their academic performance. The result (Table 9) shows that majority of the students (96.9%) agree that reading has enhanced their academic performance

Table 9: Academic Performance

Reading influence on academic performance	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	127	96.9
No	4	3.1
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2023

As a follow-up question the respondents were asked to indicate the specific ways in which reading has impacted on their academic performance by strongly agreeing, agreeing or disagreeing with the following statements:

Statements	Responses		
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
It has improved my ability to understand	78(59.5%)	47(35.9%)	2(1.5%)
My written english has improved	81(61.8%)	42(32.1%)	4(3.1%)
I can now speak english fluently	65(49.6%)	58(44.3%)	2(1.5%)
It has broaden my horizon	51(38.9%)	53(40.5%)	9(6.9%)
I do better in my examinations	62(47.3%)	57(43.5%)	2(1.5%)

Source: Field Study, 2023

The result from Table 10 indicates a mixed set of responses for the respondents. Whilst the overall responses for statement number 1 indicate that more respondents 59.5% strongly agreed, 35.9% agreed and 1.5% disagreed with the statement that “reading has improved their ability to understand”. For statement number 2, the majority of respondents 61.8% strongly agreed, 32.1% agreed and 3.1% disagreed that reading has improved their written English. For the third statement, the table indicates that more respondents 49.6% strongly agreed with the statement that their spoken English has been improved, 44.3% agreed and 1.5% disagrees with it. A little over 40.0% of the respondents agree, 38.9% strongly agreed and 6.9% disagreed with the statement number 4 that reading has broadened their horizon. Similarly, more respondents 47.3% strongly agreed, 43.5% agreed and 1.5% disagreed with the statement number 5 that reading has improved their performance in examinations.

Discussion of findings

With regards to how leisure time was spent, 26.7% of the respondents indicated reading a story book, 8.4% indicated that the listen to music, 7.6% used their leisure time browsing the internet, while 6.9% of the respondents watch movie. Most of the respondents 33.8% did not indicate what they use their leisure time for. The findings suggest that a sizeable number of the respondents do not know what they should use their leisure time for either to use to read or do something else. This current study finding confirms that assertion that with the emergence of the internet and social media majority of students now spend a lot of their time on browsing the internet and visiting social media sites in preference to reading a novel or fiction Owusu-Acheaw et al. (2014). Owusu-Acheaw and Larson's study indicated that about 62.0% of the respondents used their leisure time in visiting social media sites.

The respondents were asked what they think might hinder their reading ability and an interesting revelation was made. Most of the respondents 30.5% indicated there was no time for them to read, 16.0% said they do not have the purchasing power to acquire the reading materials that interest them, 14.5% also said they do not have access to reading material though they desire to read, 7.6% indicated lacking interest in reading whilst 3.8% said they were not encourage to read. The findings revealed the need for parents to acquire and encourage their children to develop the habit of reading so that it can become part and parcel of them when they grow up. The finding of the study agrees with a research conducted by (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023) that 48% of the people studied in Malaysia University said to engage in reading when there is time. However, the finding of the current study and that of (Mohamad, Majit & Ooi, 2011), contradict the finding of (Owusu-Acheaw et al., 2014), where 30.0% of respondents indicated that the environment they found themselves was a hindrance to their reading habits, 10.0% indicated the social status of their parents, 3.0% expressed their unwillingness to reading and the majority (57.0%) indicated that mere laziness was a major hindrance to their reading habit. Owusu-Acheaw et al., (2014), therefore concluded that parents need to encourage their children to develop the habit of reading from infancy so they can grow up with positive reading habit. The study further finds out if there is a library in the school and majority (98.5%) of the respondents said the school had a library. A question was asked whether they visit the library and the purpose and 74.8% of the respondents indicated patronizing the library, 67.2% visited the library to conduct research, 51.9% visited the library to do their assignment, 46.6% visit to seek for information, 45.0% visit the library to study to pass their exams, 37.4% visit to read for

pleasure, 33.6% visit to read newspapers, 29.0% also go there to borrow story books whilst 6.9% visit there to access the internet respectively. With regards to what reference material that is available for consultation in the library 76.3% of the respondents said the only one at the library is a dictionary which is mostly consulted. Statements regarding attitude towards reading were posed and respondents were asked whether they agreed to those statements and it was found that most of the students 57.3% disagreed, 41.2% agreed to a statement that "I often start reading a book but get bored after reading few chapters", 61.1% disagreed and 37.4% agreed on a statement "I cannot find time to read", 67.2% disagreed and 31.3% also agreed on a statement that "reading is hard work", 70.2% disagreed and 28.2% agreed on the following statement "I can't find things that interest me", meanwhile, 64.1% agreed and 34.4% disagreed on this statement that "I will rather read my notes", whilst 93.1% disagreed and 3.8% agreed that "I think reading is a waste of time". The deduction was that most of the respondents believed that being a student, they need to read beyond their class schedule

Received: 18.01.2024**Accepted: 22.01.2024****Published on: 31.01.2024**

which they think may broaden their knowledge in order to perform better in their academic work.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to ascertain the reading habits and its effect on academic performance of students of Jinja Senior Secondary School. Based on the findings of the study, it was revealed that the perception that people of Africa have not cultivated the culture of reading is not entirely true since most of the respondents were found to read different types of reading materials such as fiction, novels, newspapers, magazines, etc., after their normal school schedules. Reading was also found to impact their academic performance in different ways including knowledge acquisition, improvement in their verbal and written English, grades, performance in their examinations, and broadening of their horizons. They however encountered problems such as, lack of access to reading materials, lack of money to buy the materials, lack of interest in reading, lack of encouragement to read and lack of time to read which hindered their quest to develop the reading culture. It is important for stakeholders to work together to solve these problems for more impactful academic performance. **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings for the improvement of reading habits among the students of Jinja Senior Secondary School.

Some of the respondents indicated they needed to be encouraged to develop love for reading, therefore It will be appropriate for the authorities to at least add one lesson to the time table as a reading lesson. Awards could be instituted to award best students in reading comprehension and those who read the most books per year.

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Received: 18.01.2024

Accepted: 22.01.2024

Published on: 31.01.2024

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