
THE INFLUENCE OF 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 findings indicated 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", the majority of respondents 61.8% strongly agreed, 32.1% agreed and 3.1% disagreed that reading has improved their written English, 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. 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. The school librarian should regularly weed out outmoded materials from the library's collection. When this is done, the students will be better encouraged to patronize the library.

Key words: reading habits, learners, academic performance and literature

Background of the Study

Reading is considered as a basic tool for learning and therefore important to every individual. Consequently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have focused most of her activities within the area of promoting reading among communities. For instance, as far back as 1972 UNESCO launched a programme captioned, 'Books for All' for the member states to implement to improve reading habits in their various countries (Moses, 2023). A paper also delivered at the 65th IFLA Councils and General Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand in 1999, indicated that if developing countries, especially Asia and Africa do not put adequate measures in place to promote reading habits in their respective countries more people will become illiterate by the end of the century (Christopher et al., 2022). In most African countries, reading in general has been recognized as an academic exercise often linked to the reading of only textbooks which deals with the core content of the subject matter. Formation of reading habits among students in Uganda should be a matter of concern to all stakeholders in the country (Chawla & Joshi, 2019). Rosenberg (2003) states that a reading nation is a winning nation therefore efforts should be made to promote reading among students in the country.

Statement of the Problem

The current problems of students such as poor performance in examinations as well as poor speaking and writing of English have been attributed to lack of reading habits amongst them. Poor reading habits in the secondary schools have become an issue of great concern among parents, government and educationists in the country (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023). In Uganda, the performance of students' writing U.N.E.B examinations in the country has been deteriorating for some time now. This deterioration has been attributed to poor reading habits among students. For example, the Uganda National Examinations Board Executive Secretary's report for

the U.N.E.B examinations for 2017 and 2018 revealed a percentage failure of 31.19% and 19.15% respectively. The report attributed the poor performance to lack of intensive and extensive reading, poor communication skills, and lack of understanding of questions, poor orthography or spelling skills (Pauline, 2023). The report recommended that students must read widely to broaden their knowledge and improve on their vocabulary. Another report by the Uganda Education Service Commission in 2014 also indicated a fall in students' performance in English. Only 45.2% passed the subject to qualify for tertiary education with 20.9% of examination candidates getting Grade 9 in the English language in 2014 (Isaiah & Alex, 2023). No research was found in the literature on the reading habits and its effects on academic performance of students in secondary schools in Uganda and it is against this background that the researcher intends to investigate reading habits and its effects on academic performance of students of Jinja senior secondary school (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023).

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.

Research Questions

- 1. What are the reading interests of students of Jinja Senior secondary students?*
- 2. What types of materials do they read and for what purposes do they read?*
- 3. What is the perception of students on reading habits and academic*

performance and what factors affects their reading?

Methodology

Research Design

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 numbered data could be analyzed using statistical procedures. Quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses (Creswell, 2012, 2014, p.12).

Population for the Study

According to Busha and Harter (1980), a population is fundamental to survey research. A population is any set of persons or objects that possess at least one common characteristic. For example, various survey research projects within secondary school may define the following kinds of groups as population. 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.

Sampling Procedures

Therefore, random sampling refers to a process that gives each element in a set, such as each case in a population, an equal chance of being selected or a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis. 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 shall be selected for the study. This will be 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.

Instrument for Data Collection

Research instruments are considered as a tool that enables researchers to gather data for their research studies. Questionnaires are written instrument; interviews are verbal communication between respondents and the interviewee and observation are among the several instruments for data collection. Questionnaire, being a data collection instrument is seen to have more merits over the other survey instruments such as interview and observation. Questionnaire as a survey instrument was seen to have considerable merits over the other two which are the interview and the observation.

Data Analysis

The data collected was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). 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 (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Perception of reading

Table 1: Perception of reading

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Difficult	4	3.1
Interesting	89	67.9
Rewarding	6	4.6
Boring	10	7.6
Enjoyable	20	15.3
Non-response	2	1.5
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

With regards to the perception of reading, Table 1 shows that generally, reading is well perceived by respondents. Majority of the respondents (67.9%) perceive reading as interesting,

15.3% perceive it as enjoyable, and 4.6% see it as rewarding. Only 7.6% and 3.1% indicated reading as boring and difficult respectively.

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, 2020

It is therefore not surprising that when they asked to indicate whether they read after classes, Table 2 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 3: 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, 2022

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 4:** *Time spent per day in reading*

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

Source: Field Study, 2022

The respondents were asked to indicate the time they spend reading per day. Table 4 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%).

TYPES OF READING MATERIALS

The researcher wanted to know the types of materials read by the students, that is whether they read story books, textbooks, class notes, newspapers or magazines. The respondents were given the chance to tick all that apply.

Table 5: *Materials read*

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Storybooks</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>72.5</i>
<i>Textbook</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>66.4</i>
<i>Class Notes</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>60.3</i>
<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>31.3</i>
<i>Magazines</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>32.1</i>

Others	8	6.1
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Source: Field Study, 2022

The results (Table 5) indicate that, 72.5% of the respondents read Storybooks, 66.4% read textbooks, 60.3% read class notes, 31.3% read Newspapers and 32.1% read Magazines. The study revealed interesting results that shows that majority of the respondents read story books. The researcher was expecting all of them instead of 60.3% to indicate that they read their class notes since they will need to read their class notes to write their examinations.

Type of story books they read

The respondents were further asked if they read fiction or novel as a storybook. Table 13a shows that majority of them (91.6%) read both and 8.4% do not read any storybooks.

Table 6: Type of storybooks read (Fiction or Novel)

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

Source: Field Study, 2022

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 7: 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, 2022

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 8 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 8: 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, 2022***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 9: 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, 2022

Table 9 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 10: 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, 2022

Table 10 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 11) shows that majority of the students (96.9%) agree that reading has enhanced their academic performance

Table 11: Academic Performance

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

Source: Field Study, 2022

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:

Table 12: Extent to which you agree with the following statements on reading;

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 broadened 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, 2022

The result from Table 12 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.

Use of leisure time

The respondents were asked to indicate how they used of their leisure time. The results (Table 19) shows that they used their leisure time to do various things including reading storybooks (26.7), listening to music 8.4%, browsing the internet (7.6%), and watching movies (6.9%). Others are visiting social media sites, watching TV, and engaging in sporting activities.

Table 13: Use of leisure time

<i>Leisure time</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Watch TV</i>	8	6.1
<i>Read storybooks</i>	35	26.7
<i>Browse the internet</i>	10	7.6
<i>Visit social media sites</i>	9	6.9
<i>Listen to music</i>	11	8.4

Watch movies	9	6.9
Engage in sportin g activities	3	2.3
Others (please specify)	1	0.8
Non-responses	1	0.8
Error in Answer	44	33.8
Total	131	100

Source: Field Study, 2022

FACTORS THAT AFFECT OR HINDER READING HABITS

The respondents were required to indicate the factors that affect or hinder their reading habits. The results (Table 20) shows that the three main hindrances to their reading are lack of time to read (30.5%), lack of money to buy the books (16.0%), and lack of access to reading materials (14.5%). Others are lack of interest in reading and lack of encouragement to read.

Table 14: Hindrances to reading

Hindrances to reading	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of access to reading materials	19	14.5
Lack of money to buy the books	21	16.0
Lack of interest in reading	10	7.6
Lack of time to read	40	30.5
Was not encourage to read	5	3.8
Others (please specify)	1	0.8
Non-response	5	3.8

Total	131	100
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Source: Field Study, 2022

LIBRARY USE

The school has a library but the researcher wanted to find out whether the respondents were aware of the library so they were asked to indicate whether their school had a library. Over 98% of the respondents answered yes to the question meaning they all know there is a library in the school except one respondent (Table 21a).

Table 15: Availability of school library

	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	Yes	129	98.5
	No	1	0.8
	Total	130	99.2
	Non-response	1	0.8
Total		131	100.0

Table 16: Library visit

	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	Yes	98	74.8
	No	32	24.4
	Total	130	99.2
	Non-response	1	0.8

Total	131	100.0
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Source: Field Study, 2022

Follow-up question was whether they visited the library and 74.8% indicated they patronize the library (Table 21b). The respondents were further asked to indicate why they do not visit the library, and varying views were expressed. One (1) respondent stated the attitude of the librarian, 8.0% indicated not having time, 0.8% preferred to read class notes instead of visiting the library, 6.4% indicated lack of current materials whilst the rest of the respondents (84%) indicated visiting the public library instead. Thus, it is probable that the library is not well patronized by respondents because of lack of current materials

Purposes for visiting the library

Table 17: Purpose for visiting the library

Responds	Frequency	Percentage
To read for pleasure	49	37.4
To do assignment	68	51.9
To borrow a textbook	34	26.0
To borrow a storybook Fiction or Novel	38	29.0
To study and pass my exams	59	45.0
To access the internet	9	6.9
To request for photocopy service	3	2.3
To conduct research	88	67.2
To seek information on current issues	61	46.6
To read Newspapers	44	33.6

Source: Field Study, 2022

When the respondents were asked to indicate their purposes for visiting the library, the findings (Table 17) shows that majority of the respondents go to the library to conduct research (67.2%), do assignment (51.9%), seek information (46.6%), study for exams (45.0%), read for pleasure (37.4%), and read newspapers (33.6%) in descending order. Others are to borrow textbooks or storybooks, and to access the Internet.

Reference materials in the library

Table 18: Reference material use in the library

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
	Dictionary	100	76.3
	Textbook	19	14.5
	Internet	1	0.8
	Total	120	91.6
	Non-response	11	8.4
Total		131	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2022

The respondents were asked to indicate the type of reference material used and most of the respondents 76.3% indicated they used dictionary. They were asked to mention other reference materials available in the library and no one indicated the library had other reference materials. But the research later visited the library and found out that the library has other reference material such as encyclopaedia Britannica.

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.

Recommendations

The school authorities to collaborate with the Parents Teacher Association (PTA) and other stakeholders to solicit for more current reading materials to stock the library. This will encourage the students to patronize the library and also having access to adequate reading materials. The school librarian should regularly weed out outmoded materials from the library's collection. When this is done, the students will be better encouraged to patronize the library.

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