

READING HABITS AND ITS IMPACT ON LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN LITERATURE; A CASE STUDY OF BUKWO SECONDARY SCHOOL, BUKWO DISTRICT.

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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 Bukwo secondary school, Bukwo District". The objectives were; to investigate the reading habits of students of Bukwo 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. The findings indicated that more respondents 59.5% strongly agreed, 35.9% agreed and 1.5% disagreed with the statement that "reading had improved their ability to understand" and also the majority of respondents 61.8% strongly agreed, 32.1% agreed and 3.1% disagreed that reading has improved their written English. The school librarian should also assist the authorities to help instill the love for reading in the students as this is believed to be one of the keys to success in both academic and life.

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

Background of the Study

Reading habits among students in general have become a source of worry to many including educationists who continue to complain about low standards in both writing and speaking of the English language (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). Reading also increases the vocabulary of individuals and enables them to speak and write well. Reading attitudes lead to positive reading experiences which also lead to higher academic performance (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023). People read for various reasons. Some read to find more information on an aspect of social living, some read to alleviate boredom, some read to while away time, and some

also read to gain specific information (Kanyerere & Muhammed, 2023). To others, reading doubles as a form of leisure and hobby. Others also read to acquire knowledge in order to pass their examination (Richard et al., 2022). 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 (Richard, 2022). For instance, as far back as 1972 UNESCO launched a programme captioned, 'Books for All' for the member states to implement to improve reading

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habits in their various countries. The main purpose of the programme was to promote and encourage reading habits among people globally (Mark, Kazaara, Deus, Julius, et al., 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 (Tumusabe Ezera et al., 2022). In most African countries, reading

Statement of the Problem

Students' current problems such as poor performance in exams as well as poor speaking and writing in English have been attributed to their poor reading habits (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). 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 has been deteriorating in the country for some time (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). This deterioration has been attributed to poor reading habits among students. 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 failure percentages of 31.19% and 19.15% respectively (Micheal et al., 2023). The report attributes poor performance to insufficient intensive and extensive reading, poor communication skills and insufficient understanding of questions, poor spelling or spelling skills (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). The report recommended that students should read a lot to broaden their knowledge and improve their vocabulary. Another 2014 Uganda Education Service Commission report also indicated a decline in student performance in English (Suzan & Kazaara, 2023). 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.

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 (Victoria et al., 2023). Formation of reading habits among students in Uganda should be a matter of concern to all stakeholders in the country. Rosenberg (2003) states that a reading nation is a winning nation therefore efforts should be made to promote reading among students in the country (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023).

A literature review showed that research on reading habits in Uganda has focused on tertiary education students and school pupils (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). 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 (Godfrey et al., 2023). No research was found in the literature on reading habits and their effects on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Uganda, and it is against this background that the researcher intends to investigate the reading habits and their effect on the academic performance of students at the senior secondary school Bukwo school (Micheal et al., 2023).

Purpose of the Study

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

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the reading habits of students of Bukwo 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.

Methodology

Research designs according to Creswell (2014) are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study. The design consisted of a clear statement of the research question as well as plans for gathering, processing, and interpreting the findings intended to answer the question or objectives which some researchers refer to as a strategy of inquiry. 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. All Form One students, All Form Two students, All Form Three Students, All Day students, All Boarders/Boarding students, All General Arts students. Peil (1995) also mentions that the elements that make up the population should be identical either by living together in a defined territory of having a common nationality.

The population under studied were Forms 1, 2 and 3 students of Bukwo Senior Secondary School in Bukwo District. The total number of students is 1,893. The males constitute 1,017 and females 876. The study was carried out at Bukwo Senior School in Bukwo District. 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

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 8 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 (Oromo et al., 2023).

Reading beyond class schedule

Table 2: 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 (Mark, Kazaara, Deus, Julius, et al., 2023).

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 3 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 (Oscar et al., 2023).

Time spent per day in reading

Table 4: Time spent per day in reading

Hours spent in reading per day	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, 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%) (Tasha et al., 2023).

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

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Storybooks	95	72.5
Textbook	87	66.4
Class Notes	79	60.3
Newspapers	41	31.3
Magazines	42	32.1
Others	8	6.1

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 (Mark, Kazaara, Deus, Nelson, et al., 2023).

Type of story books they read

The respondents were further asked if they read fiction or novel as a storybook. Table 6 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 7 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 (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Muhammad, 2022).

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 9: Access to reading materials (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Komunda, 2022b)

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 (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022).

Table 10: 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

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Table 10 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 (Moses et al., 2023).

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 11: 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 11 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 12) shows that majority of the students (96.9%) agree that reading has enhanced their academic performance (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Komunda, 2022a)

Table 12: Academic Performance

Reading influence academic on 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 13: Extent to which you agree with the following statements on reading;

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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, 2022

The result from Table 13 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 14: Use of leisure time

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

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Watch movies	9	6.9
Engage in sporting 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 15) 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 15: 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

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 16).

Table 16: Availability of school library

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

Table 17: Library visit

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
	Yes	98	74.8
	No	32	24.4
	Total	130	99.2
	Non-response	1	0.8
Total		131	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2022

Follow-up question was whether they visited the library and 74.8% indicated they patronize the library (Table 17). 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 18: 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 a 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 22) 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.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to ascertain the reading habits and its effect on academic performance of students of Bukwo 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 librarian should also assist the authorities to help instill the love for reading in the students as this is believed to be one of the keys to success in both academic and life.

The authorities could also conduct a survey to find out the materials that the students will be interested in and acquire them for the library. The students can suggest materials to be acquired for the library and this will enable the library to have a balanced collection whose content can be attractive to its clientele.

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