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The Impact of Library Education on Reading Habit Among Senior Secondary School Students in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Library education, which refers to the intentional teaching of students to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes to search for, analyze and utilize information and reading resources, is generally considered to be the basis of a lifelong reading culture. However, school libraries in many secondary schools in Nigeria have been found to be poorly equipped, poorly staffed and have little or no involvement in the curriculum in the regular classroom, despite the concern of a perceived decrease in students' voluntary reading. The paper provides a conceptual and theoretical discussion of library education and the reading habit of senior secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria. The paper adopts constructivist learning theory, self-efficacy theory, cognitive load theory, and a uses and gratifications perspective, and contends that using structured library instruction to foster reading habit works through three overlapping mechanisms: skill development (information literacy), motivational scaffolding (self-efficacy and autonomy), and environmental design (access to, exposure to, and modelling of). The literature reviewed in the empirical section from Nigeria, Africa, and international sources, all link active school-library user behaviour and information-literacy learning with increased reading behaviour and academic performance, and the competitiveness of digital media, coupled with the infrastructure challenges of public secondary school libraries in Nigeria. The paper suggests that library education is not an adjunct to instruction, but rather a major part of the instructional process, and offers a conceptual framework and a set of recommendations for policymakers, school administrators, teacher-librarians, and for future empirical research. Since this is a theoretical paper, no primary survey or experimental data were obtained; only an illustrative and clearly hypothetical framework is suggested as a guide to future empirical studies rather than as a reported result.

Keywords: *library education, reading habit, information literacy, senior secondary students, school libraries, Lagos State.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Reading is one of the most important skills that can be learned by a student and it is a skill that is used to comprehend all subjects in the secondary school curriculum and it will affect their academic and civic participation in the future. Library education, as used in this context, is the systematic instruction that is imparted to students by the librarians and teacher-librarians and which involves library-use skills, information-seeking strategies and reading guidance, rather than the presence of the physical library building. Education stakeholders have consistently expressed concern in Nigeria and especially in Lagos State, a state with a high and rapidly growing urban population, about the declining levels of voluntary reading among secondary school students, which is blamed on the ease of access and popularity of competing digital media, scarcity of library facilities, and a lack of coordinated reading programmes (Jaja & Udumukwu, 2023).

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With the right staffing and a place in the curriculum, the school library has the potential to reverse this trend by providing students with diverse reading materials, with instruction on how to search and evaluate information, and with the opportunity to develop students' independent reading habits. While there are doubts about the extent to which Nigerian public secondary schools are providing structured library education—that is, by having a collection of books—as opposed to merely a collection of books, the specific mechanism(s) through which library instruction could impact reading habit has not been well synthesized in the Nigerian context (Jaja & Udumukwu, 2023). This paper is conceptual as it reviews the existing theory and empirical literature on the subject to form a consistent picture of the possible influence of library education on the reading habit of senior secondary school students in Lagos State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students in Lagos State are, like their peers globally, growing up saturated with digital media and social platforms, which increasingly compete with books for their leisure time and attention (Loh & Sun, 2022). Meanwhile, many public secondary schools in Nigeria have poorly-trained teacher-librarians, inadequate library stock and inadequate classroom time for library, even when a library exists physically, proper library education or training of students on the concept of searching, evaluating and reading is rarely available. This leads to a potential double disadvantage: less exposure to guided reading instruction and more exposure to non-reading digital activities. If there is no well-defined conceptual understanding of the connection between library education and reading habit, rather than just library access, then action in response to the problem may only address the supply of books and not instructional capacity. This paper aims to clear up that relationship at the conceptual level as a basis for future empirical investigations and policy design.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to conceptually and theoretically examine how library education influences reading habit among senior secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria, by reviewing relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical literature, and by proposing a conceptual model to guide future empirical investigation.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This review is guided by the following objectives:

1. To clarify the concepts of library education and reading habit as they apply to senior secondary school students.
2. To examine theoretical frameworks that explain how library instruction might shape reading behaviour.
3. To synthesise empirical literature, Nigerian, African, and international, on the relationship between library engagement, information literacy, and reading or academic outcomes.
4. To propose a conceptual framework linking library education to reading habit, for use in future empirical research.
5. To derive policy and practice recommendations for strengthening library education in Lagos State's senior secondary schools.

1.5 Research Questions

This conceptual review is organised around the following questions:

1. What do library education and reading habit mean in the context of senior secondary education?
2. What theoretical perspectives help explain the pathway from library instruction to reading behaviour?
3. What does existing empirical literature suggest about the relationship between library/information-literacy engagement and reading or academic outcomes?
4. How might these theoretical and empirical strands be integrated into a conceptual framework applicable to Lagos State?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The paper has a number of audiences. From a policy perspective, it is important to realise that it is not just the provision of books, but a commitment to providing library education, that is the most direct catalyst for the formation of reading habits, with implications for education budget allocations and teacher education programmes. It provides a theory-based argument for integrating library instruction into the curriculum agenda, as opposed to a self-service library, for school administrators and teacher-librarians. For researchers, it offers a theory and a survey of the evidence-based and recent literature that can serve as the foundation for the next empirical paper on this subject, such as the type of quantitative survey design that would be needed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

Library Education. Library education in the school context is the purposeful teaching of students in locating, assessing, and using information and reading materials, usually provided by a qualified teacher-librarian in the school, through orientation programs, embedded lessons, guidance in reading and reference services. It differs from access to a library, which only means that it is physically or digitally available. Information-literacy instruction is an essential part of library education and has recently been defined as comprising more than just the process of searching, but higher-order skills such as evaluating, synthesizing, and using information sources ethically (Ngozi, 2024). The expectation of library education programmes is that they should integrate the changing roles of the librarians as reference personnel and teachers with hands-on, practical experiences (Kalu & Ochepa, 2021).

Reading Habit. Reading habit is the relatively consistent, intentional behavior of a student in respect to reading materials over a period of time; it is defined by frequency, duration, print/digital preference and motivation (recreational versus solely academic). The general trend in the literature today is to separate reading habit from reading ability. A student might be a very good reader but not have a good reading habit, that is, voluntarily take time to read. This is the type of behaviour that library education programmes seek to change. In the last few years, a few scoping and systematic studies have identified that in spite of the growing number of digital tools available, many adolescents still prefer to read print texts for extended periods of time, and that they primarily read on a digital device for short periods of time or in search mode (Loh & Sun, 2022).

Senior Secondary Students. In Nigeria, students from the senior secondary school (SS1 to SS3) are the adolescent age group who are experiencing a process of identity formation, the pressure of examinations, and are often constantly immersed in digital connectivity. This developmental phase is a time when students' choices regarding use of time for reading for pleasure grow more pronounced, and is a critical time for library education to shape enduring reading habits.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The library education to reading habit relationship can be explained by four theoretical perspectives that can be deemed plausible.

Constructivist Learning Theory. Constructivist theory is that it is more important for the learner to gain knowledge by experiencing something rather than receiving the knowledge from an educator (Kivunja, 2021). In the context of library education, this theory states that students' reading habit cannot be taught by merely exposing them to the collection of library books, but must be modeled, modeled, and modeled again: students can make their own choices about and preferences for texts, and they can develop their own competencies for reading under the direction of a teacher-librarian. This serves as evidence of the value of interactive library-instruction sessions as compared to static orientation lectures.

Self-Efficacy Theory. According to self-efficacy theory, self-efficacy is the confidence an individual has in their own ability to successfully engage in a task that greatly influences whether they will attempt it and continue trying to do it (Bandura, 2020). Library education can help to develop a student's confidence in his/her reading and research ability by explicitly teaching them how to find and use the available resources successfully. If students do not feel they can navigate a library or assess sources, then they are less likely to want to continue to read, and, if they do, their evaluative confidence is lower, as diminished evaluative confidence does tend to reduce engagement (Bear, 2020). This indicates that library education has a part to play, not just through the provision of books, but also in helping to diminish task anxiety and increase perceived competence.

Cognitive Load Theory. The cognitive load theory (CLT; Sweller, 2020) is one approach that addresses the limited space available in working memory and the need to reduce unnecessary cognitive load to allow students to allocate resources to real learning. If students are required to search for a text that is suitable for them, yet the library is poorly organised, the cataloguing is unclear, or there is no guidance on how to search for suitable texts, the searching process can take up extra space in students' minds and makes it less likely that they will access the library voluntarily. This load can be reduced by structured library education, which leaves more time for the task at hand—reading—because the learning of efficient search and evaluation strategies is separated from the actual reading.

Uses and Gratifications Perspective. The uses and gratifications approach was first developed to understand audiences' media selection behaviour, as people actively select media to meet their psychological needs, which can include information gathering, entertainment, or social interaction (Whiting & Williams, 2020). Applied in the library, the theory implies that library education ought to be more effective in helping students select materials for reading for their own specific motives than in giving them a set reading list of books, because a continued voluntary reading habit is more likely to be developed if the student's own motive is satisfied by what the library provides.

These frameworks indicate that library education can impact on reading habit in three ways: first, by constructing the skills (constructivist approach, hands-on, less cognitive load); second, by motivating scaffolding (self-efficacy); third, by needs-matching (uses and gratifications); each of these factors reinforces the other, but does not work in isolation.

2.3 Empirical Review

Nigerian and African Perspectives. There was a relative scarcity of empirical research on school libraries and reading habit in Nigeria compared with the literature in the Global North, but there has been a significant increase in the last few years. Active use of the school library was a significant factor in determining students' reading habit, with students who used the library on a regular basis and with a purpose indicating a high level of engagement with reading than those who used the library occasionally or not at all, according to a study of senior secondary school students in Abuja (Jaja & Udumukwu, 2023). This is a reinforcement of the general finding in related Nigerian studies that library skill, as opposed to library access, is the determinant factor in academic performance, with the conclusion that Nigerian undergraduates with better information-literacy skills having better academic performance in their respective fields (Ngozi, 2024). Also, the Nigerian literature on library and information science has emphasized that library training programmes should be abreast of the changing technological trends so as the teacher librarians are becoming more and more required to be equipped with new and practical skills for teaching, rather than the rigid orientations that they had been used to in past decades (Kalu and Ochepa, 2021).

Digital Competition & Format Preference. One consistent finding in the recent research is that there is a conflict between digital media consumption and sustained reading. Loh & Sun (2022) conducted studies in a highly technologically connected school and found that the ability of the school to provide technology had no general impact on reducing reading in favor of technology, but instead: This is an insightful finding for Lagos State because blanket bans on students accessing devices are less likely to ingrain the habit of reading than explicit teaching of reading enjoyment and competence to students.

Information Literacy and Confidence. Research on the librarian-student relationship has shown that students' confidence and success in information search and assessment will be enhanced when they have direct contact with the librarian, rather than when they only work independently (Blake & Potvin, 2021). This is in line with guided relational teaching as posited in the self-efficacy theory as the medium of teaching; and it suggests that the proper provision of properly equipped school libraries to train teacher-librarians is essential to improving reading habits in Lagos State schools.

Synthesis. The pattern that emerged from the Nigerian, African and international literature reviewed is that there is no relationship between reading habit and the mere existence of library collection, but it is quite related to the active, guided reading engagement in the library and information-literacy competence. This provides empirical evidence to support the theoretical argument that library education is the more important factor, because it is an education, meaning structured instruction, not simply access, as opposed to passive access. This distinction is formalised in the proposed conceptual framework below.

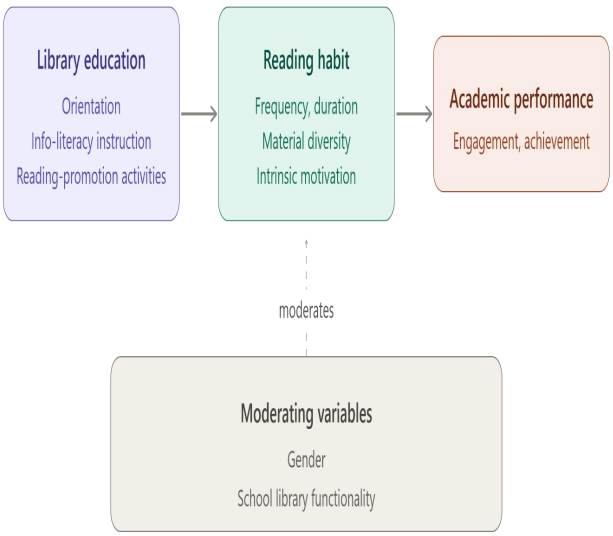
3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the theoretical and empirical review given above, this paper suggests that there are three mediating pathways between library education and reading habit among senior secondary students.

Library Education (Input) → (a) Information-literacy skill development → (b) Reading self-efficacy and confidence → (c) Needs-matched exposure to reading material → Reading Habit (Outcome), with the contextual factors such as school infrastructure, teacher-librarian availability, gender and competing digital media use.

This framework suggests that library education does not directly impact on reading habit, but rather in a cumulative way, with reading skills reinforcing reading confidence and relevance, which in turn supports reading skills. Here presented it serves as a conceptual framework for future empirical testing (e.g., using structural equation modelling of the three mediation pathways) rather than as a description of observed relationships. Path values for numbers, numbers of samples, or correlation values used to illustrate such a model in subsequent work would be required from a real data collection exercise and are not claimed here.

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework



4. DISCUSSION

Based on the reviewed literature and theory, the question that emerges is not whether there is a connection between the library and the formation of reading habits, but rather whether reading habit formation among the student bodies of senior secondary schools is related to library education itself, that is, the instructional, relationally functional and skill-building role of the school library. This is very significant for Lagos State in particular. The history of the public secondary school of Nigeria has always been geared towards physical provision of the library instead of training of teacher librarians, set time for instruction and pedagogical design, which is why a library education framework moves the attention of librarians from merely counting books to teacher librarians' training and the integration of the library into instruction.

Competing media literature also indicates that a mere ban or restriction on devices to manage students' attention is unlikely to be enough to rebuild their reading habit as the evidence shows that reading pleasure rather than device banning is correlated with sustained reading across media (Loh & Sun, 2022). It is consistent with the "uses and gratifications" theory which portrays library education as an active process assisting students to locate material corresponding to their prior interests and motivations as readers, whether printed or electronic, and not to the process of digital engagement itself.

Concurrently, there are some weaknesses associated with the literature that are pertinent to the context of Lagos State. Much of the empirical base is still cross-sectional and self-report and Nigerian studies are still fewer than the literature from the Global North, and causal claims about the impact of library education on reading habit should therefore be approached with caution until more Nigerian empirical studies, including the kind of primary, quantitative studies this conceptual paper aims to lay the groundwork for, can be performed.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Based on the above, there are several practical implications that follow for the Lagos State SS system:

- **For policy makers:** Funding for trained teacher librarian positions and instructional time should be increased and not just funding for the acquisition of books; as the literature reviewed shows, the gains in reading habit are more likely to be a result of guided instruction and interaction.
- **For school administrators:** Library induction should not be a single week event but should be a recurring, ongoing instructional activity that continues throughout the school year, as per constructivist theory which places emphasis on ongoing, hands-on activity.
- **For teacher-librarians:** To ensure students have less cognitive load, search and evaluation strategies should be explicitly taught and needs-matching conversations should be included in instruction, to help students identify reading material that is related to their personal interests and is available in both print and digital formats.
- **For future researchers:** A quantitative research type, cross-sectional or quasi-experimental study that investigates and tests, empirically, the three pathways that involve information-literacy, self-efficacy and reading-habit as conceptual mediators proposed in this study in a representative sample of senior secondary students in Lagos state public schools, using validated information-literacy, self-efficacy and reading-habit questionnaires.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has theoretically and empirically established that library education, not library access, best accounts for reading habit among the Lagos State Senior secondary school students. The use of structured, relational, needs-matched instruction, suggested by the above mentioned perspectives, fits with most recent empirical Nigerian, African and international literature on library engagement and information literacy. In this regard, the strengthening of reading culture in secondary schools in Lagos State depends not so much on the quantity of books in the libraries as it does on the quality of the teacher librarians, and the allocation of precious instructional time in schools. The conceptual approach presented here is a starting point in the empirical research required to directly test these relationships.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Government and Policy Makers:** Teacher Librarians should be given the opportunity to attend training sessions at the K-12 level, in addition to book-supply training committees, to facilitate training and recruitment in Lagos State public secondary schools.
2. **School Administrators:** Incorporate library-skills instruction in regular schedules by subject, not just in one orientation session.
3. **Teacher-Librarians:** Plan teaching based on explicit search and evaluation strategy teaching and reading suggestions that match students' needs in both print and electronic resources.
4. **Teachers:** Work with teacher-librarians to integrate reading and information-literacy activities into content area assignments.
5. **Parents:** Encourage reading at home through library-linked assignments and encourage reading for the parents.
6. **Future Researchers:** Develop empirical studies, primary data studies (survey or quasi-experimental) to test the proposed conceptual model in Lagos State using validated instruments for information literacy, reading self-efficacy, and reading habit.

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