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Relative Effects of School Location, Class Levels and Gender on Reading Needs of Secondary School Students in Nigeria (Pp. 36-42)

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Abstract

This paper identified the effects of school location, gender and class levels on secondary school students reading needs. The research instrument used was a self-designed questionnaire. Four hypotheses were formulated and tested using t-test and Analysis of Covariance at 0.05 levels of significance. The findings revealed that that there was no significant difference between male and female and reading needs. There is a significant difference between urban and rural schools and the reading needs of learners. There was a significant difference between class levels and the reading needs of learners. Based on these results and conclusion, appropriate recommendations were made.

Introduction

Prominent in the heart of any developing nation is the education of its citizenry, and one of the yardsticks for measuring and categorizing countries today is their literacy level. Although the word literacy has been elongated beyond its traditional domain of reading and writing to the ability to compute, reading is still at the centre of literacy development. Reading is one of the most fundamental skills upon which all formal education within the school system depends.

Dada (1999) describes the school as a place where learning takes place. A fundamental role of the school in any community is to develop in the child cognitive powers and correct thinking processes and methods of inquiry, so that whatever the child does and says can be based on reason and understanding. One of the major ways by which this lofty role can be accomplished is by reading. Books and magazines that can arouse the reading interest of learners must be made available in the school and class libraries. Schools can be located within rural or urban areas. The classrooms are normally categorized into levels or grades for effective learning with male and female learners of various ability levels.

Over the years, research, observation and experience have revealed that students perform poorly within and outside the school system. Many reasons have been advanced for this ugly trend. Prominent among these is students' inability to read let alone comprehend simple English passages (Ezeokoli 1998, Lawal & Adebileje (2005). Comprehension of written materials is one of the most fundamental objectives of the school system. Students must read and comprehend their books, instructions, notices, examination questions and so on (Ofodu, 2009). Existing literature reveals that gender is one of the factors accounting for students' differing academic performance (Odaga & Heneveld, 1995, Ariyo 2007). Past studies have established that learners have reading problems, low reading interest, text readability problems and poor comprehension ability without a link to variables such as the school location, class levels and gender. More so, students reading needs have been found to include the following: inadequate reading spaces in classrooms, lack of libraries in many towns, inadequate reading texts, reading environment etc.

Christopher (2007) adds that although Nigeria recognizes literacy and education as essentials for development, she does not guarantee the availability of basic reading materials for the child forced to school. She laments that there are inadequate provision of teaching-learning materials and facilities in Nigerian schools.

Etuk (1997) asserts that government development plans have not paid adequate attention to the development of library facilities generally and especially in rural library facilities in particular. He added that many Nigerian public primary and secondary schools either in the rural and urban centres do not have library facilities. These students do not use school libraries. Bamberger (1993) states that where books or printed materials are not

available, where there are insufficient libraries: public, school or classroom libraries or special libraries are located in the urban areas alone rather than rural areas, where there is insufficient or shortage educational library manpower, limited fund and so on, there is bound to be a gulf between the rural and urban learners' reading achievement.

The poverty level of the parents and the quest for material things may not allow the parents have sufficient time to encourage and monitor their children's reading and visit to libraries. These factors may have been responsible for the non-availability of recommended reading texts for students and the non-involvement of parents in the reading activities of students. This corroborates the studies of Oduolowu and Lawani (2005) that most parents do not recognize the importance of parental involvement in home language activities. They emphasized that parents should encourage their children by showing interest in their progress in school, taking part in Parents' involvement in children reading activities should be encouraged to make learning to read and reading to learn enjoyable experiences for them.

Statement of the Problem

It is a well known fact that success in school is greatly determined by success in reading. The hues and cries that accompany the release of results of secondary school students at the different examinations are quite disheartening. Although many reasons have been advanced for this, there seem to be less focus on the reading needs of learners taking the variables of gender, school location and class levels as major constraints to learners' performance. The purpose of this study therefore is find out whether gender, class levels and school location play any role in the reading needs of learners in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

Four null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between male and female students and their reading needs.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between urban and rural schools and their reading needs.

Ho3: There is no significant difference between class levels and the reading needs of students.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the main effect of school location on the reading needs of students.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted in this study. The population consisted of all secondary schools in Idanre Local Government Area of Ondo State. The target population was four secondary schools purposively sampled from Idanre Local Government Area of Ondo State; two schools from urban and two rural areas respectively. A total number of two hundred and forty students were used. Sixty students were selected from each school. The research instrument used was a self – designed questionnaire. It contains two sections: section A contains personal data, school, location, urban and rural, sex (male and female), class and age while section B contains questions requiring students to respond with either Yes or No. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. The test re-test method of reliability was used and a reliability coefficient of 0.90 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using t-test and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

Results

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between male and female students and their reading needs.

Table 1 shows that at 0.05 level of significance $t\text{-cal} (1.81) < t\text{-tab} (1.96)$. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference between male and female and reading needs.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between school location and the reading needs of students

Table 2 shows that at 0.05 level of significance $t\text{-cal} (18.17) > (1.96)$. Therefore, there is a significant difference between urban and rural schools and the reading needs of learners.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference between class levels and reading needs.

Table 3 reveals that $f\text{-cal} (2.303) > f\text{-tab} (2.21)$ is at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected as there is a significant difference between class levels and the reading needs of learners.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the main effect of school location on the reading needs of students

From the table 4, f -cal (327.01) > f -tab (3.84), this implies that there is a significant difference in the effect of location on their reading needs. Also, f -cal (6.18) > f -tab (3.84), this implies that there is also a significant difference in the interactive effect of location and sex on their reading needs.

Discussion

The result revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female students and their reading needs. This simply means that the non-availability of reading materials for students both at home and in the school is not peculiar to male or female students. Both male and female perceive their reading needs alike. This finding supports the studies of Tunde-Awe (2006) and Oladunjoye (2003) where gender had no significant influence on learners' performance. It was also discovered that there was a significant difference between urban and rural schools and the reading needs of learners. This result is not surprising as many urban schools are sometimes situated in conspicuous places that may attract outright criticisms if they are discovered to lack some of these reading facilities. This probably may have enhanced the result.

The findings also showed that there was a significant difference in the main effect of location on the reading needs of learners but there was no significant difference in the main effect of sex on their reading needs. There is also a significant difference in the interactive effect of location and sex on their reading needs.

The finding also showed that class levels had significant difference on reading needs of learners. This result is inconsistent with that of Ariyo (2007) where class levels had no significant effect on students' attitude in learning Physics.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings, it was concluded that school location has effect on secondary school students' reading needs especially those in the rural areas. It was also concluded that class levels of students have influence on the reading needs of learners. The following recommendations were made from the findings and conclusion of the study:

- Secondary schools should be provided with functional libraries where students can read irrespective of the location of their schools.

- Students at different class levels should be provided with adequate reading materials both by parents, schools and the government because they are all important.
- Government at all levels should provide adequate reading materials for students at all levels of learning in the secondary school

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Table 1: t-test showing significant difference between gender and the reading needs of students.

Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab
Male	150	16.13	1.65	238	1.81	1.96
Female	90	15.70	1.95			

Table 2: t-test showing school location and reading needs

N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab
112	17.41	1.17	234	18.17	1.96
128	14.70	1.13			

Table 3: ANOVA summary showing significance between class levels and reading needs

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	f-cal	f-tab
Between groups	35.345	5	7.069	2.303	2.21
Within groups	718.388	234	3.070		
Total	753.733	239			

Table 4: ANOVA summary: showing significant difference in school location and sex on their reading needs.

Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	f-cal	f-tab	Decision
Corrected model	447.27	3	149.09	114.81	2.61	
Intercept	54109.92	1	54109.92	41668.77	3.84	
Location	424.64	1	424.64	327.01	3.84	S
Sex	2.752	1	2.75	2.11	3.84	NS
Location- sex	8.024	1	8.02	6.18	3.84	S
Error	306.46	236	1.29			
Total	61938.00	240				
Corrected Total	753.73	239				