

A Survey of Students Study Habits in Selected Secondary Schools: Implication for Counselling

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Abstract: This study examined the usefulness of Imbibing in the students study habit as a means of enhancing their academic performance. The study tried to delve into the fallen standard of education in Nigeria and reasons for the fallen standard from the perspective of the stakeholders in education, the teacher, parents as well as the students themselves. The study also examined efforts that have been put in place in die past to put an end to the fallen standard of education. In these regard, some hypothesis were raised to find out reasons for the fallen standard. However, the study showed a high and academic performance. Furthermore, the difference in the study habits are attributed to the facts that students do not know how to study and those that manage to study do not adopt effective study methods!

Key words: Academic performance, Nigeria, student habits, study habit

INTRODUCTION

It is an understatement to say that the standard of education in Nigeria has fallen. However, it has been realized that students who possess adequate mental abilities sometimes do not perform well in their academic work either because they do not know how to study effectively or they do not use the most effective method of studying.

Many questions have been raised by teachers, parents and students themselves on why students perform so poorly academically. Even the state government has shown some concern over this in recent times by introducing low costs books for both primary and secondary schools. Although this was meant to create the desire to study by students, it has not helped the situation much because, students do not read these books. Many of the students complained of lack of time and conducive environment for study, others who try to study complained of lack of understanding.

There is no doubt that these complains evidently point to one fact. That is, lack of effective study habits. It is this problem, the researcher wishes to investigate as it appears to be one of the root causes of the dwelling standard of our educational system today.

Research questions:

- What proportion of junior secondary school students possess good study habit than those in senior secondary school?

- Will male students in junior secondary schools perform better than female students in senior secondary schools?

Hypothesis: The following conjectural statements were postulated for this study:

- There is no significant difference in the study habits of junior and senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.
- There is no significant difference in the study habits of male and female students in junior and senior secondary schools in Egor, Local Government Area of Edo State.
- There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male students in the junior secondary schools and female students in Senior Secondary Schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychologists as well as layman have attempted some definitions of the word "study". To some of them, study means hard work and is usually associated with school work. To others, study is applicable to other situations in life other than academic work.

Mace (2002) pointed out that study is a systematic acquisition of knowledge and an understanding of facts and principles that calls for retention and application. Kelly (1998) stated that study is the application of one's

mental capacity to the acquisition, understanding and organization of knowledge; it often involves some form of formal learning. Crow and Crow in Okorodudu (2000) explained that study is a programme of subject matter mastery. It involves hard work.

However, study involves the individual's thinking, feeling, personality, social interaction, physical activities and health rather than mere learning of fact on the thought system for the purpose of recall when asked.

For those who belong to the school of thought that study is not only applicable to academic work, Olatubosun in Oladele (2000) explained that a teacher is studying when he examines the results of an experiment, a lawyer when he prepares his case, a salesman when he learns about his product and a citizen when he tries to understand the issues in an upcoming election. Studies require time spent in a deliberate attempt to learn. It should be differentiated from simple leisure to reading.

Thomas and Robinson (1990) emphasized that the learner needs to use a systematic discipline and purposive approach to study. Effective study consists of a conscious sequential series of inter-related steps and processes.

Okorodudu (1995) asserted that, study involves the total of all behavioral patterns (addition, verbal, psychomotor, emotional) determined purpose and enforced practices that the individual adapts in order to learn and achieve competence.

Study techniques: Most students do not know how to study probably because they are not aware of what techniques to apply in the study situation or they study at odd times and in odd places. Hills and Ballou (2000) had an understanding of this deficiency in students approach to study and they developed a comprehensive study skill manual for college students. Effective study cannot be acquired without the application of these skills and methods. Some of which include reading, note-taking, time consideration, organizing material in a study and choosing a good study environment among others.

Environment of study: Consideration is here first given to the environment of study as it appears to have adverse effect on the whole concept of study. Where one studies has an important effect on one's efficiency because the location and all of its characteristics are stimuli. The stimulus of the study situation should produce the response of studying and no other response. It has been suggested that an important approach is to have a set aside specifically for study. It should be well ventilated, noise-free and well lighted room or open place with a desk and a chair. Ruch (1995) wrote on the need to consider the type of chair and desk used for study. These should be such that allow the individual to maintain an erect and

comfortable sitting posture. The study desk should be spacious enough for the books and materials but should contain only what one needs at a time.

Hepher (1990) revealed that the effect of temperature and humidity on the body temperature of the individual can cause a reduction in the body function and mechanism. The emphasis here is on the need for abundance of fresh air in the study environment to avoid unnecessary fatigue.

Hills and Ballou (2000) pointed out that glaring light could cause eye strain and headaches. Therefore covered light bulbs and light coloured, blotters be used if possible to reduce light intensity. In effect, light should not shine directly on the table or reading desk. Taking into consideration a rural setting where students have to study under locally made lamps and hurricane lanterns, these should be adjusted well enough to reduce light intensity or place at a considerable distance away from the reading desk. It has been observed that some people cannot study without music, Hills and Ballou (2000) agree that music is good if it does not constitute noise in itself or when used to neutralize other external noise.

Time planning: Whatever time a student spends on study, what time of the day he sets aside for work only by organizing and planning their time that student can avoid distraction from regular studies. Determining time limits for study sets the immediate goal for completing ones work within specific time limits and also helps one to resist recreational distraction, Robinson (1990). As regards time planning, Hills and Ballou (2000) suggests the use of work diary a work diary allows the student to look at everything he has to do and to apportion time to every subject. Organizing time in this way helps to minimize worry and indecision that may arise in case of any extra work that has to be slotted in, the diary should be planned on the basis of needs and purposes; allocating adequate time to each task so that no particular task consume more time than necessary.

Effective and fast reading: Today, student has much to read because of the great demand inherent in core curriculum. This is more obvious at the junior secondary school level in which the students are expected to study about fourteen different subjects or more in some cases. The ability to read fast will be an advantage. Quick reader take in and retain more than slow readers because the quick reader catches the drift and flow on the passage better whereas the slow readers delay over each word.

Solomon (1999) stated that most poor readers are too slow ones. They were often concerned with unimportant details while the good and fast readers often adopt a wider view of all the paragraph. There are a number of bad habits which poor readers adopt; most of which involve using extra body movement in the reading process

inefficient reading, the muscles of the eyes should make the external movement. Extra body movement such as pointing with the fingers or moving the lips, do not help reading and often only help in slowing it down.

There are some cases in which slow reading can however be adopted depending on the subject matter and the purpose of reading Maddox (2002) formulated about four different types of reading which include mastery reading, exploratory and revision reading critical and pleasure reading. He stressed that these types of reading have different rates for the individual.

Concentration: The ability to direct ones attention on the task at hand is necessary for effective study. Robinson (1990) outlined five major conditions that affect concentrations, These include distractions, (internal and external situations) associated with other activities, study materials not convenient, poor lightening and physiological conditions. Oladele (2000) suggested that to avoid external distraction, students could choose place of study which can stimulate them to study. The essence of this is that once they are in such environment associated only with study, distraction such as anxiety and indecision, day dreaming, mental and physical fatigue that impair the ability to concentrate will be avoided, Personal problems that keep on flashing to one's mind if not properly tackled and discarded can act as greatest hindrance to concentration.

Comprehension: Reading without comprehension is no use. Robinson (1990) stated that reading with one's head instead of one's eyes is what effective study habit involves- The students must learn to read with an active attitude of seeking what is important in the material and subordinating what is merely explanatory. He suggested that the techniques of pre-comprehension help in speeding up comprehension. Many students do not seek to understand the basic concepts that seem simple and relevant but later in their studies they realize that without learning the basics adequately comprehension of more difficult materials is difficult. Students complain that they do not understand what they have read. It is suggested that reader searches for the meaning in the mind of the writer to know what to emphasize in his reading.

Remembering: The ability to remember what has been read is a vital skill. The term means retaining past experiences. It is thought that in remembering, a memory trace is laid down on the mind and being a sensory impression, by repetition the traces are made deeper and therefore are more lasting Hallas (2002). Remembering must involve either recall or recognition. The former necessitates the reproduction of material that is not actually present before the senses at the moment.

According to Oladele (2000) there are four kinds of remembering and they include recognition, recall, reproduction and performance, he held the view that our failure to recall emanates from non practice He also maintained that performance, a fourth kind of remembering, is the also performance of habits so well learned that they are highly automatic.

But for Hallas (2002), remembering is in three parts, viz:- attending to, which is associated with short term memory, the second and the third being the need to think about and use the material associated with long term memory respectively. Most students make the mistake of reading and re-reading without actually training to think over what they have read. A very effective technique in remembering is to study the passage or diagram as the case may be for a given period of time. Try to reproduce it immediately and then later at increasing intervals of time, for example, every day for a week and then every week for a month. This method is known as repeated reproduction and has been found to be very useful.

Note-taking: This is one of the activities that is believed to aid learning and remembering and consequently academic success Note-taking when properly done, involves not only reading and writing or listening to lectures and jotting down points but also requires concentration and reading out for necessary facts. It may not be as easy as it seem to be the observer. It involves the thought and hearing ability of the individual. Note-taking may have detrimental effect for students who are slow in listening efficiency. In view of this, Derville (1998) suggested certain aids for effective note-taking in the form of short abbreviations; for example, "b/w" to mean between "C" to mean with "C" for which "b/w" for before etc. These abbreviations would be helpful to the slow writer. Care need to be taken to see that only relevant ideas are included in a note, whether it is in a lecture or from a text book. The following procedure has also been suggested:

- Read through the text carefully
- Read through it again picking out the key points that the section covers and writing them down as headings on separate pieces of rough paper.
- Make note on pieces of paper under each key point.

It may be necessary to use a second that has similar points since one book may have points not contained in the first text book, making the study varied and more stimulating. These notes would be useless if they are not reviewed consistently and regularly particularly just before examination.

Okorodudu (2000) emphasized that unless a student has an exceptional memory, it is difficult to master and

recall accurately all the main points and relevant details in a study material by merely reading it.

The SQ 3R model: This is an effective formula developed by Hail-Quest and Reviewed (2000) and expatiated upon by several other authors. It places emphasis on the principle of preparation for learning and knowledge of results.

"S" stands for survey

"Q" for Question

"3Rs" for Read, Recite and Review

Survey: Depending on what the student wishes to study, a text book, a chapter of a textbook or a journal, article, Oladele (2000) suggested that in doing survey, one needs to read the section headings to get a general idea of what the chapter is about, Read the introduction and summary if the chapter has them. Read few sentences at the beginning and at the end of the paragraphs. Make notes of few words, terms and ideas.

The importance of this is that it creates some expectations and familiarization with the structure of the material and the author's style.

Akinboye (2000) presented the need for the student to look at the preface the table of contents and then scan through each topic. Scanning familiarizes the readers with the overall organization of the material by providing the intellectual Scaffolding from which the material might be related and providing the student with knowledge about the general characteristics of the material. From the initial reading the reader should know what to expect. In essence the strategy allows the reader to develop personalized advance organizers.

Question: The advantage of setting questions for oneself or using past questions related to the study is that it acts as a guide. Questioning the material Enables one to develop a set of concepts within which to fit the ideas one will be studying one of the best techniques for generating questions is to turn to the major headings of the chapters into who, what, where, why and how questions. Studies have shown that students benefit from student-generated questions. Frazier and Schwart (1995) conducted a research using high school students. They were made to set questions for themselves as they studies a prose passage either individually or collectively during tutorials, Results of this study showed that recall was greater in the question study than in the study only, It is suggested that students studying for external examinations like the Senior Secondary School Examinations (SSSE) or NECO or Genera! Certificate of Education (GCE), make use of past questions.

Reading: The essence of reading is to get the whole meaning of the passage. Students spend time reading in

order to get the actual meaning of the chapter. Reading seeks to acquaint the students with many ideas that would otherwise have been overlooked when surveying. Reading with the intent to understand should be the major aim. It is important to read each line and take note of each sentence and sequence of events or arrangement of facts in the materials. Hills and Ballow (2000) explained that reading those phrases and sentences bring out the meaning in the passage, reading should not be done just once but several times until the meaning in the passage is got. While reading, it is advised that student be in a relaxed mood in order to concentrate.

Recite: Lovell (1993) was one of the earliest psychologists to carry out a study on recitation as a learning strategy. In the study, children in grades 4-6 were given either diagrams or short biographies to memorize. Results of this study obviously showed that recitation affected the children's learning positively. Lovell (1993) stated that instead of re-reading a material to be learnt, it is better to recite to oneself or to a friend, or write it out, making use of prompts whenever necessary. He recalled that relevant experimental evidence shows that with children and adults, the more time devoted to recitation, the quicker will be the rate of learning.

The importance of recitation is further stressed by a later study carried out by Del Giono, (1998), it was a comparison between the read-recite and read-re-read procedures. Retention in these two groups were tested immediately after study and one week later The read-recite group scored significantly higher on both tests than the earner to check on his own efforts. It should be noted however that though recitation is advantageous, it can only yield results when materials have been well understood and short.

Review: Necessary as recitation is as a study strategy, review is equally very useful; it has been defined as recall and rehearsal of information presented in a study. The major advantage is that it aids both immediate and long-term retention As the students go through the material over and over again, the tendency is for them to get used to the material while being reminded as well as of those points they may have overlooked or forgotten,

Lovell (1993) asserted that retention can be aided by thorough learning, by studying at a suitable period of the say, by constantly reviewing and by avoiding circumstances likely to cause interference. He also pointed out that when materials have been learnt, partly forgotten and learn again, the rate of forgetting is slower after the re-learning and it becomes lower still after further periods of review. This would appear to consume a lot of the student's time and can only be utilized by those who determined to study for excellence.

Study and motivation: Motivation may be considered to be anything, material or non material which energize and direct a person's behaviour towards achieving a set goal. Human have an inborn tendency to become self-actualized; a general positive force that is responsible for people achieving their potential and performing good works.

Oladele (2000) said that motivation refers to whatever is within the individual that propels the individual into some sort of action. Three types of motivation move people to action. They are needs, emotions and feeling. All the three develop from inborn factors. Lovell (1993) presented a number of contemporary theories of motivation. The instinctive theory, which states that human behaviour is largely instinctive in origin and that human minds has certain innate tendencies which are the essential motive powers of all thought and action; the psycho-analytic theory which explains human behaviour as being frequently influenced by motives and attitudes of which the individual is unaware; the social learning theory which is of two kinds (culture-pattern theory and field theory) which maintains that motivation is determined by the interaction of the individual with the environment The culture pattern theory stresses the effect of early upbringing on behaviour patterns while the field theory emphasizes the effect of all forces acting on the individual in current situation. The learning or behaviour theory suggests that all behaviour is dependent on the needs of the individual and that the learning that takes place only when behaviour is being motivated.

Effect of motivation on study: Many students do not study just for the interest of studying. Study is hard work. A great number of motivational interest; work habits and personality characteristics combine in various ways to determine school achievement. Many studies have shown that among the many variables that affect academic achievement, motivation is obviously an important one. Whether a student will work at a task to pursue excellence at any given time during the day depend on his consumatory needs (hunger, thirst etc) being met; his hierarchical structure of internal motives to achieve success in various activities and his tendencies to avoid failure.

According to Ball (2000) students report two distinct reasons for approaching school related tasks such as study:

- A general need to avoid failure
- A positive feeling towards school

Students must be motivated before they can study effectively. This motivation can be from within or without or from both. Reasons for poor motivation could be any of the following:

- Preferring something else to actual school
- Attending college as a means to an end rather than learning
- Distracting personal problems
- Laziness and inadequate orientation

Study and academic performance: There is likely to be a positive correlation between academic success and effective study habits. Brown and Holtzman (1989) in a study-attitudes inventory for predicting academic success across validated a 102 item study attitude inventory and it yielded correlations of 0.05 and 0.52 with one semester grades for 219 male and 176 female.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The population was made up of fifty students drawn from five private secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area in Benin City. The sample was drawn only from private schools because, as at when this study was carried out public schools were shut down, due to NUT strike over Teachers Salary Scale (TSS). The private school used were Ogbomwan Group of Schools, Saint Maria (Jobravo) Mixed College, Integrity High School, Alpha Group of Schools and Leaders College all in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.

Research instrument: Questionnaire: Bakare (1977a, b) study Habit Inventory (Question 1-45). A standardized study habit inventory developed by Bakare (1977a, b) was used.

Validity and reliability of the instrument: The validity and reliability of the instrument was determined through several studies carried out by Bakare (1977a, b).

Administration of instrument and data collection: The instrument was administered on each of the supervision of their teachers, Each question was read out and explained to the students. Students were made to answer each question as honestly as possible and the questionnaire was collected immediately.

Scoring was strictly based on the scoring manual provided by the author. Each item has a maximum of true marks and a minimum of one mark. Since there are 5 items, the highest score was 164 and the lowest was 77.

Statistical information: Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the population sample (50 students) was computed and it yielded 13.5 which was approximated to 14. With this, the first 14 scores and the last 14 scores were selected to represent two sets of groups which were assigned variable names X and Y.

Method of data analysis: The study habits inventories were analyzed using the t-test. The mean scores and standard deviation scores of the variables were used to determine the correlation coefficient to ascertain whether or not the correlation between study habits and students performance in academic work is high or low.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Introduction: This chapter dealt with results, analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings. This was based on the information collected from respondents. Three null hypotheses were earlier formulated in chapter one to direct the study. For each of the three null hypotheses, we have that:

$$H_0: \mu_1 < \mu_2$$
$$H_1: \mu_1 > \mu_2$$

Nevertheless, since we are using the t-test, if the calculated t-value is greater than or equal to the table t-value we shall reject the null hypotheses (H_0) and accept the alternative hypotheses (H_1).

Analysis: In the course of analyzing the data, the two sets of group scores were assigned variable names. The first set of 14 scores was assigned X variable while the second set was assigned Y variable. The X and Y variables were independent variables. The mean score and standard deviation were calculated as a prelude to find the correlation coefficient in order to ascertain the relationship between study habits and students performance in academic work.

Nevertheless, SPSS software package was used to determine the mean score, standard deviation, correlation coefficient and the t-test score Pearson product moment was used for the correlation coefficient.

From the SPSS analysis below, the mean score and standard deviation for variable X were 132.79 and 13.740 while the mean score and standard deviation for variable Y were 94.14 and 6.112 respectively. The correlation coefficient was 0.751. this implies that there is high relationship between study habits and students academic performance, in the same vain, the t-test score was 14:463 at 5% level of significance (that is, * is 0.05).

As for the table t-value, a degree of freedom of 216 was used. Since it was a two tailed test, α which is 0.05 was divided into two to yield 0.025. Therefore, the table t-value was 7.053.

Findings: As could be seen, the correlation coefficient was 0.751 which is an indication that the correlation

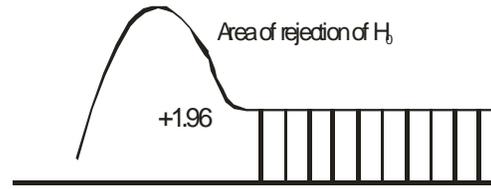


Fig. : 1 Hypothesis test

between study habits and students academic performance is high, That is to say, it is only when students imbibe or cultivate proper study habits that their academic performance can be improved upon.

That is it may, based on the result of this study, the table t-value was 2.056 while the calculated t-value was 14.463. Since the calculated t-value was greater than the table t-value, the null hypotheses (H_0) in chapter one were rejected. In the light of this, the alternative hypotheses were accepted. In the same vain, calculated t-value was greater than the null hypothesis acceptance region value of $t = 1.96$ in the normal curve, therefore, the null hypothesis were rejected which led to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_1). By this acceptance, it implies that, there is significant differences in the study habits of junior and senior secondary school students as well as male and female students. Nevertheless, there is significant difference in the academic performance between male students in the junior secondary schools and female students in senior secondary schools.

However the differences in the study habits of the students attributable to the study method indulged in by the various students. From the raw data, it was observed that most students do not know how to study. Even those that manage to study do not adopt effective study method. This may lead to lack of understanding and inability concentrate, eventually giving up the idea of studying which are indications of the fall in the standard of our educational system today, (Fig. 1).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the study habits of students in Egor Local Government Area of Benin City. For the purpose of this study, three null hypotheses were formulated and a standardized study habits inventory developed by Bakare (1977a, b) was administered to fifty students drawn from five private schools. The statistical method employed for analyzing the data were the mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient and the t-test distribution at 5% level of significance and a degree of freedom of 26.

Conclusion: On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- There is a high correlation or relationship between student habits and students academic performance.
- There is significant difference in the study habits of secondary school students whether male or female.
- The differences in the study habit are attributed to the fact that students do not know how to study and those that manage to study do not adopt effective study methods.
- Lack of proper study habits is one of the root causes of our dwindling educational standard.

Recommendations: In the light of the findings and conclusions made in this study, the following recommendations were made;

- All secondary schools-public or private should go for the services of either a counselor or an evaluator or both that can help the students to imbibe effective study habits.
- Parents should always check their wards at home to ensure that they study more often than not. Also, provide study essentials such as textbooks, notes and biro.

Suggestion for further research: It is of the desire of the researcher that the topic of study is a fluid and dynamic. Areas of study of the students study habits are inexhaustible, It is therefore of paramount interest that another study be carried out on the same topic but bearing in mind the limitation of this study such as limited time and few population sample. A larger population sample with students cut across public and private schools should be used for further investigation.

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