

ASSESSING INFORMATION RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND READING PRACTICES AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OWERRI MUNICIPALITY, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Reading is a fundamental academic skill that shapes students' learning outcomes and intellectual development. However, inadequate access to information resources continues to constrain reading habits in many Nigerian secondary schools. This study examined the influence of information-resource availability on the reading patterns of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, Imo State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, involving 426 students drawn from ten public secondary schools using stratified and proportionate random sampling techniques. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that information resources were generally scarce across the sampled schools, while students exhibited moderate reading patterns. Key challenges affecting reading behaviour included limited access to print and digital materials, unfavourable reading environments, and digital distractions. The regression results indicated a significant positive influence of information-resource availability on students' reading patterns. The study concludes that access to adequate and relevant information resources is a critical determinant of students' reading behaviour. Enhancing the availability of diverse and up-to-date learning materials, alongside improvements in school library facilities, can significantly strengthen students' reading engagement. The findings highlight the need for strategic policy interventions and sustained investment in school libraries to promote effective reading habits and support academic development among secondary school students.

Keywords: Information resources; reading habits; secondary school students; survey research; library access; Nigeria; Owerri Municipality

Introduction

Reading is an acquired skill through which individuals engage with written texts to gain information, develop knowledge, and derive enjoyment. When reading becomes a consistent and reflective practice perceived as both necessary and pleasurable, it develops

into a lifelong habit that supports continuous learning and intellectual growth. Reading also enhances quality of life, strengthens social relationships, and contributes to societal cohesion (Thuku, 2017). Consequently, proficiency in reading and writing remains central to educational and personal development globally and in Nigeria.

Despite its importance, evidence indicates a decline in young people's engagement with sustained reading, largely due to the growing influence of digital media and internet use. In Nigeria, Kabir and Jeromes (2025) reported that digital platforms have significantly reshaped secondary school students' reading culture, shifting attention away from sustained print reading toward fragmented electronic content. Similarly, Ogunbodede and Sawyerr-George (2023) observed that students' reading engagement did not increase during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite extended free time, due to weak reading routines and inadequate library services. Nonetheless, access to appropriate digital and print resources has been shown to positively influence reading habits, suggesting that resource availability can mitigate declining reading engagement (Ogunbodede & Sawyerr-George, 2023). In many Nigerian secondary schools, the development of effective reading habits is further constrained by obsolete information resources, poorly managed school libraries, limited reading spaces, and pervasive digital distractions. Esan and Akporhonor (2021) found that although school libraries existed in Edo State, many lacked current resources

and trained librarians, leading to low utilization. While existing studies acknowledge these challenges, few have specifically examined the extent to which information-resource availability—such as access to current books, digital materials, and conducive reading spaces—influences students’ reading patterns.

Against this backdrop, the reading culture of students in public secondary schools in Owerri Municipality, Imo State, appears weak, with many students devoting more time to social media than to academic or leisure reading. This trend has implications for academic performance in examinations such as WAEC, NECO, and JAMB. The extent to which information-resource availability shapes students’ reading behaviour in this context remains underexplored. This study therefore investigates the effect of information-resource availability on the reading patterns of public senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, with a view to providing evidence-based insights for strengthening reading culture and lifelong learning.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study addresses the following research questions.

1. What is the extent of information resources availability to secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, Imo State?

2. What is the reading behavior of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, Imo State, Nigeria?
3. What challenges do senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, Imo State, face in developing their reading habits?

HYPOTHESIS

One null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Information resources availability does not significantly influence reading patterns of senior secondary school students.

Literature Review

The accessibility and availability of information resources play a critical role in shaping students' reading behavior. Studies consistently show that the presence of both print and electronic resources is linked to improved reading habits and academic performance (Mutsotso & Abenga, 2010; Adefokuna & Mbashir, 2017). Mutsotso and Abenga (2010) argue that students who lack awareness or access to information resources are unlikely to develop effective reading habits. Print materials, such as textbooks, encyclopedias, and lesson notes, alongside interpersonal resources like teachers, peers, and counselors, and electronic/technology resources such as e-journals and audio-visual media, collectively influence students' engagement with reading. Evidence suggests that schools

with well-equipped libraries promote better reading habits. For example, Keith (as cited in Katsayal & Jabo, 2023) found that students in schools with adequately resourced libraries exhibited stronger reading habits compared to those in poorly equipped schools. Suleiman, Hanafi, and Tanslikhan (2018) further emphasize that the quality of library services directly correlates with academic achievement and knowledge growth. However, despite these findings, many secondary schools in Nigeria lack sufficient library resources, limiting students' opportunities to cultivate reading habits (Adefokuna & Mbashir, 2017).

Overall, the literature indicates a clear relationship between resource availability and reading behavior, yet there is limited empirical research in Owerri Municipality. While studies acknowledge the types and importance of information resources, few investigate how accessibility, usage, and adequacy interact to influence reading habits. This gap underscores the need for a focused study examining the effect of information-resource availability on reading behavior among secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, thus providing evidence to inform interventions for enhancing reading culture.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the reading behaviour of senior secondary school students and the effect of information-resource availability on their reading patterns in Owerri Municipality, Imo State. The design was

appropriate for collecting quantitative data from a large population at a single point in time and for identifying relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population comprised 988 senior secondary school students drawn from ten public secondary schools. Using simple random sampling, a sample of 426 students was selected to ensure equal representation.

Data were collected using a structured, researcher-designed questionnaire consisting of sections on reading behaviour, print and interpersonal resources, and electronic resources. Items were measured using a four-point modified Likert scale, ranging from Very High Extent to Very Low Extent and from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts—two school librarians and one educational measurement specialist. A pilot study involving 30 students from a comparable school outside the study area yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72, indicating acceptable reliability.

Permission was obtained from school authorities, and questionnaires were administered during school hours under supervision to ensure a high response rate and data completeness. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to describe reading behaviour and information-resource availability, while multiple regression analysis was employed to

determine the predictive effect of information-resource availability on reading behaviour at the 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical considerations were observed: participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Extent of information resources availability

S/N	Resources	VHE	HE LE	VLE	NO	X	
1.	Textbook	230	115	30	51	426	2.2
2.	Subject textbook	166	110	75	75	426	1.6
3.	Dictionaries	125	123	56	122	426	1.2
4.	Picture	123	45	158	100	426	1.2
5.	Novels	102	104	107	113	426	1
6.	Globes	76	56	178	116	426	0.7
7.	Charts	118	77	106	125	426	1.1
8.	Atlas/maps	35	109	163	119	426	0.3
9.	Audiovisuals	100	129	109	88	426	0.9
10.	Periodicals	6	77	176	167	426	0.05
GRAND MEAN							1.01

Decision rule: if mean =<1-1.99=very low extent, 2-2.99= low extent, 3-3.99= high extent, 4-5.00= very high extent

Table 1 presents the extent of information-resource availability for senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality. The findings indicate that information resources were generally available to a very low extent, as reflected by a grand mean of

1.01. Among the listed resources, textbooks were the only materials available to a low extent ($\bar{x} = 2.2$). All other resources—including subject textbooks, dictionaries, pictures, novels, charts, globes, atlases/maps, audiovisuals, and periodicals—recorded mean values within the very low extent range. This result suggests that students' access to diverse reading materials is severely limited, with learning largely dependent on core textbooks. Such narrow resource provision restricts exposure to supplementary and recreational reading materials that are critical for developing sustained reading habits. The scarcity of periodicals, audiovisuals, and reference materials further limits opportunities for independent learning and information exploration. The finding contrasts with Abiolu (2014), who reported wider availability and use of textbooks and novels among secondary school students, as well as Bamidele (2018), whose study in Ogun State showed access to a broader range of information resources. Similarly, Haliru et al. (2015) and Singh and Singh (2021) reported comparatively better access to school library materials in Kaduna and India, respectively. The Owerri context therefore reflects a more acute level of resource deprivation, pointing to structural deficiencies in school library provision rather than lack of student interest. Overall, the results demonstrate that the very low availability of information resources constitutes a major constraint on students' reading engagement in the study area.

Research Question Two

What is the reading behavior of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, Imo State, Nigeria

Table 2: Reading behavior of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, Imo State, Nigeria

STATEMENT QUESTIONS	SA	A	D	SD	NO	X
1. Interest						3.0
I enjoy reading books about my field.	234	112	50	30	426	3.2
I would rather complete my homework and studies before watching television.	213	92	17	104	426	2.9
I see to it that extracurricular activities do not disturb my studies	214	99	34	79	426	3.0
I dedicate at least one hour daily to reading for academic or research purposes."	243	115	22	46	426	3.3
I prefer using electronic resources over printed materials for my academic reading."	238	89	64	35	426	3.2
I like reading	158	173	27	68	426	2.9
I read academic materials (books, journals, or online articles) on a daily basis	206	127	54	39	426	3.1
2. PURPOSE						2.7
I read in the school library primarily to complete assignments or classwork	245	135	29	17	426	3.4
I use the school library to prepare for tests or examinations	212	140	47	27	426	3.2
I visit the school library to read books or materials that interest me personally.	214	118	56	38	426	3.1
I use the library to read and gather information for research or term papers	135	121	75	95	426	2.6
I read in the library to keep up with new trends and developments in my	234	125	20	47	426	3.2

	discipline						
	I use the school library to read because it has materials and resources I cannot access elsewhere	224	120	45	37	426	0.7
3.	Types of materials you read						2.35
	I always read my class notes	150	178	63	35	426	0.7
	I love reading novels	147	129	45	105	426	2.7
	I read my textbook regularly	200	137	29	60	426	3.1
	I do make use of my dictionary	190	110	37	89	426	2.9
4.	Frequency of reading						2.14
	I read weekly	112	87	57	170	426	2.3
	I read as time permits	90	35	45	256	426	1.9
	I read daily	84	56	87	199	426	2.0
	I dislike reading	67	59	102	198	426	1.9
	I don't read at all	152	59	110	105	426	2.6
	Grand Mean						2.5

Source: Field Study, 2024 Decision rule: if \bar{x} is 4-5= very good, 3-3.99=good, 2-2.99= fair, 1-1.99=poor

The result in Table 2 presents the reading behaviour of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality. The results show that students' overall reading behaviour was fair, with a grand mean of 2.5. This indicates a moderate level of engagement with reading activities, but one that falls short of sustained and intensive reading habits. Across the dimensions examined, interest-driven reading recorded a group mean of 3.0, suggesting that students are positively disposed to reading when it aligns with their curiosity or academic needs. Items relating to daily academic reading, preference for electronic resources, and enjoyment of reading scored relatively high, indicating latent

motivation among students. However, this interest does not consistently translate into strong reading routines. Regarding the purpose of reading, the group mean of 2.7 reflects a fair level of utilitarian reading, largely driven by examinations, assignments, and classwork. This suggests that reading is predominantly assessment-oriented rather than exploratory or recreational.

Similarly, the types of materials read yielded a fair mean score of 2.35, revealing limited engagement beyond textbooks, class notes, and dictionaries. This narrow range of materials points to restricted access rather than lack of interest. The frequency of reading recorded the lowest group mean (2.14), indicating irregular reading habits. Many students read only when time permits or in response to immediate academic demands, raising concerns about the sustainability of their reading culture. Compared with earlier studies, these findings contrast with Haliru et al. (2015) and Bamidele (2018), who reported stronger and more frequent reading engagement among secondary school students in Kaduna and Ogun States, respectively—contexts with relatively better resource availability. The Owerri findings suggest that moderate interest exists, but limited access to diverse information resources significantly constrains reading behaviour, reinforcing the critical role of resource provision in shaping students' reading patterns.

Research Question 3: What challenges do senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, face in developing their reading habits?

Table 3: Challenges inhibiting reading behavior

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	NO
1	Lack of access to reading materials in school libraries hinders my reading habits.	87	90	120	129	2.3	426
2	My parents do not encourage or support my reading habits at home.	55	87	147	137	2.1	426
3	The school curriculum is too demanding, leaving me little time for reading.	173	155	59	39	3.0	426
4	I find it difficult to understand complex texts due to poor English language proficiency.	109	89	179	49	2.6	426
5	Limited access to digital resources (e.g., e-books, online articles) affects my reading habits.	196	107	48	75	2.9	426
6	My peers do not prioritize reading, which discourages me from developing a reading habit.	200	167	39	20	3.2	426
7	I struggle to find reading materials that interest me.	178	199	23	26	3.2	426
8	Poor lighting and uncomfortable reading environments in school library hinder my reading.	267	102	50	7	3.4	426

9	Watching TV or using digital devices (e.g., phones, tablets) for entertainment distracts me from reading.	277	102	23	24	3.4	426
Grand Mean						2.9	

Decision rule: if mean is ≤ 1.99 =strongly disagree, 2-2.99= disagree, 3-3.99 agree and 4-5=strongly agree.

Table 3 presents the challenges faced by senior secondary school students in developing effective reading habits. The findings indicate that students generally agreed that multiple factors inhibit their reading behaviour, as reflected by a grand mean of 2.9. The most prominent challenges were poor lighting and uncomfortable reading environments in school libraries and distractions from television and digital devices, both with mean scores of 3.4. These results highlight the critical role of physical learning environments and competing digital entertainment in shaping students' reading engagement. Closely following were peer influence and difficulty finding interesting reading materials ($\bar{x} = 3.2$), suggesting that social factors and limited content relevance also discourage sustained reading habits. The heavy academic workload imposed by the school curriculum ($\bar{x} = 3.0$) further constrained students' available time for reading. Moderate challenges included limited access to digital resources ($\bar{x} = 2.9$) and difficulty understanding complex texts due to weak English proficiency ($\bar{x} = 2.6$). Factors such as limited access to library materials and lack of parental support at home recorded lower,

though still notable, mean scores ($\bar{x} = 2.3$), indicating that institutional and home-based influences also play a role. The result of study, differ from Haliru et al. (2015), where domestic responsibilities and television viewing were the dominant barriers, with less emphasis on library environments.

The present study extends Tor-Akwer and Ihongo (2023) by identifying environmental quality—particularly lighting and ergonomics—as a critical constraint alongside resource scarcity. Internationally, Singh and Singh (2021) reported time constraints and lack of interest as major barriers among Indian students, underscoring contextual differences. In Owerri, the findings suggest that infrastructural and environmental deficiencies constitute primary obstacles to reading development, indicating that improvements in library spaces are essential for effective reading promotion initiatives.

Hypotheses analysis and results

Table 4: Information resources availability does not significantly influence reading patterns of senior secondary school students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	36129.056	1	36129.056	88.567	.000
Residual	6413.350	424	15.126		
Total	42542.406	425			

Dependent Variable: INFO_RES_AVAIL

The study found a significant relationship between the availability of information materials and the reading patterns of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality. With an F-statistic of 88.567 and a p-value of .000, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that information resource availability has a substantial influence on the reading patterns of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality in Imo State. In fact, the availability of information resources accounted for 84.9% of the variation in reading patterns among these students. This suggests a strong link between access to information materials and reading habits among senior secondary school students in the area. This study contributes new empirical evidence by quantifying the relationship between information resource availability and reading patterns in a Nigerian municipal context, revealing an unusually high explanatory power ($R^2 \approx 0.85$). While past studies have explored reading habits in various Nigerian states and abroad, few have combined comprehensive resource audits, behavioral analysis, and statistical modeling in the same design.

Recommendations

1. School authorities should prioritize the acquisition and regular updating of diverse information resources, including textbooks, novels, reference materials,

periodicals, and digital resources such as e-books and online databases. Adequately stocked school libraries will enhance students' access to both academic and recreational reading materials.

2. 2. School libraries should be improved to provide conducive reading environments through adequate lighting, comfortable seating, proper ventilation, and noise control. Creating reader-friendly library spaces will reduce environmental barriers and encourage sustained reading among students.
3. 3. Teachers and parents should actively encourage and support students' reading habits by providing guidance, role modeling, and positive reinforcement. Parental involvement and teacher-led reading initiatives can foster consistent reading practices beyond the classroom.
4. 4. Educational planners should review the secondary school curriculum to ensure that students have sufficient time for independent reading and library use. Reducing excessive academic pressure will allow students to engage more meaningfully with reading activities.
5. 5. School librarians should design and implement structured reading programmes such as reading clubs, book talks, reading competitions, and library orientation

sessions to stimulate students' interest and curiosity. These programmes can promote voluntary reading and improve reading frequency.

6. Schools and education authorities should invest in digital library infrastructure and provide training in digital reading and information literacy skills. This will enable students to effectively utilize electronic resources while minimizing distractions associated with non-academic digital media use.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that information resource availability significantly influences the reading patterns of senior secondary school students in Owerri Municipality, Imo State, Nigeria. Students with access to adequate print, interpersonal, and electronic resources exhibited higher engagement in reading activities, suggesting that both the quantity and accessibility of information resources are critical in shaping reading habits. Despite these findings, the study is subject to some limitations. First, it focused exclusively on public secondary schools within a single municipality, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other regions or private schools. Second, the reliance on self-reported measures of reading behavior may be affected by response bias. Third, the cross-sectional design captures a snapshot in time, limiting conclusions about long-term trends in reading behavior.

Practically, the study underscores the need for coordinated efforts by policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and parents to enhance reading culture. Policymakers should prioritize funding for well-equipped school libraries and the provision of diverse information resources. Teachers and librarians should promote active engagement with library resources and incorporate reading-related activities into the curriculum. Parents can encourage reading habits at home by providing access to books and fostering a supportive reading environment. Future research could expand the study across multiple states or regions and employ longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches to examine the sustained impact of resource availability on reading behavior.

Additionally, investigating the role of digital literacy and online resources in influencing reading habits could provide insights into addressing contemporary challenges posed by technology and social media. Summarily, ensuring accessible, adequate, and diverse information resources is fundamental to fostering effective reading habits among secondary school students, which, in turn, enhances academic performance and supports lifelong learning.

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