

LIBRARY USE EXPERIENCES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS IN IBADAN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

School libraries are distinct because they serve as learner-oriented laboratories which support, extend, and individualize the school's curriculum. The study therefore assessed the library use experiences of early childhood educators in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all five local government areas in Ibadan Municipal Area of Oyo State, while random sampling technique was used to select all Nursery and Primary Schools in the five LGAs. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all early childhood educators in selected schools. The research instrument was titled "Questionnaire on Library Use Experiences of Early Childhood Educators (QLUEECE)". Data were analyzed using simple percentages. The findings revealed that early childhood educators rarely made use of the library and only a few considered it necessary to use the library. It was recommended that early childhood educators should cultivate the habit of using the library.

Keywords: Library Use, Library Resources, Library Use Experiences, Early Childhood, Early Childhood Educators

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Libraries are considered as part of the tools required to complement the teaching and learning process in any category of educational institution. There are different types of libraries, and these libraries have diverse functions. Igajah and Ekpang (2021) opined that the general duties of libraries are to make information available to all categories of persons in the society regardless of their gender, age, race, political affiliation, or disability. Furthermore, libraries are categorized into types and resources based on the target audience. It is important to note that the function of a library depends on the purpose for which the library was established. For instance, a public library, as the description connotes, will be situated in an area that will be accessible to members of the community so that anyone could use the resources provided; National libraries are established to preserve national documents and monuments that are of national interests to a country; Special libraries are usually established by entities such as research institutes or parastatals that have documents, materials, or specimens to preserve for reference and made accessible to only those who have the authority to access the library; Academic libraries are associated with higher institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of technology, and so on; School libraries are usually situated on the premises of a secondary or primary school for the use of teachers, students and their parents.

School libraries are distinct from public libraries because they serve as learner-oriented laboratories. They support, extend, and individualize the school's curriculum. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination. Ginika (2017) as cited in Chukwueke et.al (2018) asserts that the facilities, materials, equipment, and staff of the library are organized in such a way that they support learning within the educational goals of the academic institution. Furthermore, these educational goals are geared towards ensuring that students achieve mastery of educational objectives.

According to the American Library Association (ALA,2014) cited in Olugboji (2017), school libraries are libraries within the school premises where the pupils as well as the teaching and non-teaching staff of the school have access to available library facilities such as internet access, tutoring, lending, interlibrary loan, library instruction, scanning, photocopying, and printing. Some school libraries are referred to as school library media centres. The school libraries play unique roles in promoting, protecting, and educating students about intellectual freedom. They also serve as points of voluntary access to information and ideas and as learning laboratories for students to acquire the needed critical thinking and problem-solving skills in a pluralistic society (ALA, 2014). According to the Standard for the 21st Century Learner as published by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL, 2007), the goal of the school library media centre is to ensure that all members of the school community have equitable access to books and reading, to information and to information technology. School libraries provide diverse resources for effective teaching and learning outcomes, which would include the acquisition of material location and problem-solving skills. It is a collection of resources which can be consulted by both the teachers and the learners to widen their knowledge and help them to solve problems that pertain to effective teaching and learning. These resources include printed, non-printed materials and audio-visuals such as books, journals, periodicals, discs, electronic materials,

maps, films, newspapers, e-books, and audiobooks. School library serves intended purposes, which are aimed at academic excellence. It has been appraised by different scholars as an inevitable segment of the educational system (Isaac, 2011).

Morris (2013) opined that a school library media centre uses all types of media. According to Gretes (2013), research confirms that the fundamental purpose of school libraries is to provide access to books and that access is the primary factor that leads to raising students' test scores in all aspects of literacy. Access to books not only fosters an early love of learning and has a positive effect on reading achievement but appears also to offset the impact of poverty. Furthermore, at successful schools, in addition to providing access to books, they play a key role in teaching. As leaders and instructional partners who collaborate with teachers, especially in the early grades, librarians develop in their students a life-long love of reading, build critical thinking skills and digital literacy that prepare students for the 21st century workplace, and help students meet the Common Core State Standards. Though the study was on secondary school libraries, McAlbert et.al. (2015) considered that the staffing, status of the library, available space, library collection and the budget for the school libraries were important variables that could affect the availability of school libraries. Some notable skills acquired by using the library are reading, note-taking, information literacy, material location and problem-solving skills. In the library, early childhood educators can do the following:

- Meet friends
- Use the internet
- Read or borrow reading materials
- Get resources for lesson notes
- Print documents
- Do other things.

The importance of school libraries

The importance of school libraries cannot be over emphasized. Batu et. al (2019) posited that while the role of the school library remains constant, its design, digital platform, strategies, and tools could change as technology changes. According to Batu et.al (2019), school libraries help in a variety of ways:

- Impact positively on the academic achievement of the students. Students can perform better during examination by reading various books.
- Facilitate the work of the classroom teacher and ensures each student has equitable access to resources, irrespective of home opportunities or constraints.
- Run independent learning programs, which integrate information resources and technologies.
- Equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in a constantly changing technological, social, and economic environment.
- Collaborate with classroom teachers to plan, implement, and evaluate inquiry-based programs that will ensure students acquire skills to collect, critically analyze and organize information, solve problems, and communicate their findings.

- Provide and promote quality fiction to develop and sustain in students the habit of reading for pleasure and to enrich students' intellectual, aesthetic, cultural and emotional growth.
- Cater for differences in learning and teaching styles through the provision of, and equality of access to a wide range of curriculum resources – fiction and non-fiction, digital, print, audio, and video.
- Provide teachers with access to relevant curriculum information and professional development materials within and outside the school; and opportunities to cooperatively plan, implement and evaluate learning programme.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This research was focused on the library use experiences of early childhood educators because they can only give what they have. If they do not appreciate the importance of using the library, physical or virtual, it might be difficult for them to encourage their pupils to do so. Only one research question was raised to guide this study, that is, 'what are the library use experiences of early childhood educators in Ibadan Municipal Area of Oyo State, Nigeria'?

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The choice of this research design was to aid the researcher to describe the variables as they were since they already existed and there was no cause for manipulation. The pre-service teachers' library experiences had occurred before the study and the research was carried out to describe those experiences. According to Creswell (2014) as cited in Asio (2021), this type of research design includes numeric description of trends, attitudes, or perspectives of a population by means of studying a sample of it.

The population for the study comprised early childhood educators in private nursery and primary schools in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. Twenty early childhood educators were randomly selected from private nursery and primary schools in 5 Local Government Areas in Ibadan Municipality in Oyo State, Nigeria. They were selected from private nursery and primary schools that were purposively selected because of availability of school libraries. According to Olugboji (2017), the proportion of schools with libraries in Oyo State is low. One Research Instrument was developed for the study. It was a Questionnaire on Library Use Experiences of Early Childhood Educators (QLUEECE). The questionnaire was used to gather information about the library use experiences of early childhood educators. Section A contained 4 items that covered the demographic information of the respondents such as name of school, gender, age, and highest qualification. Section B contained 10 items. The section was designed to gather information on the frequency of the library use of early childhood educators and their perception on the need for school libraries. The section was also developed to get information from the early childhood educators regarding their attitude towards the use of the library as a performance booster for them and their pupils. The section also had items on their awareness of library resources and other services available in the library. Data collected were analyzed using percentages and bar charts. Using the research question as guide, the focus of the analysis was on the

library use experiences of early childhood educators.

Results and Discussion of Findings

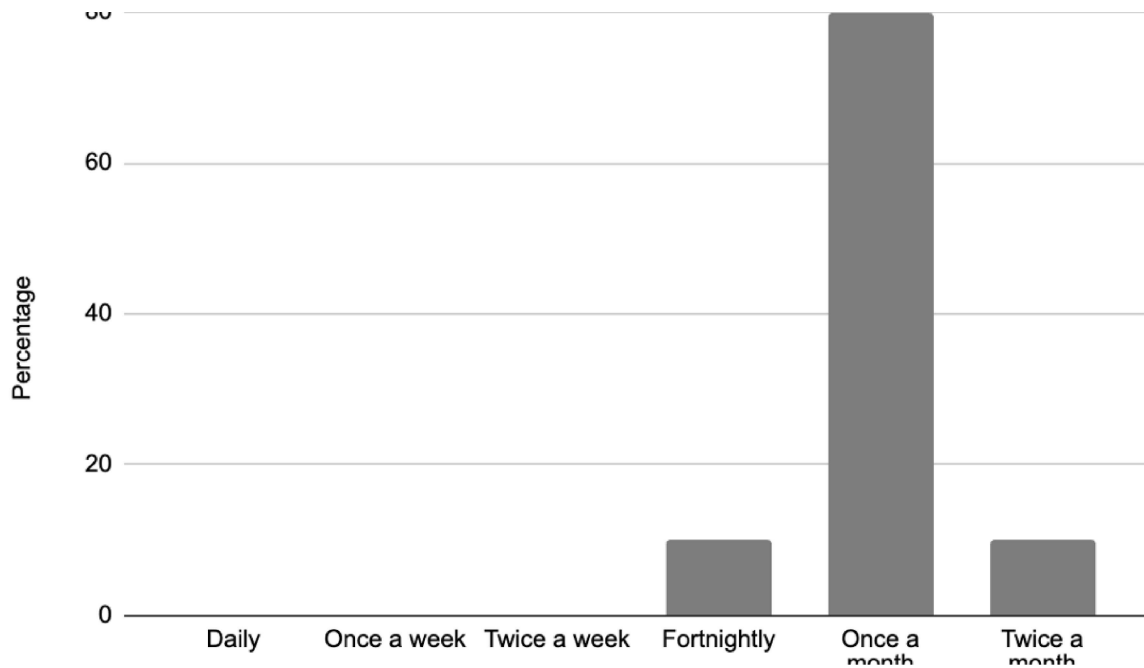


Figure 1: School Library Use Experiences of Early Childhood Educators in Ibadan Municipality of Oyo State, Nigeria

Figure 1 is a representation of the number of times that early childhood educators use the school library. It shows that 10% of respondents use school libraries fortnightly, while 80% use them once a month and another 10% use them twice a month. This shows a low level of usage of school libraries by early childhood educators in nursery and primary schools in the Ibadan Municipal Area of Oyo State, Nigeria.

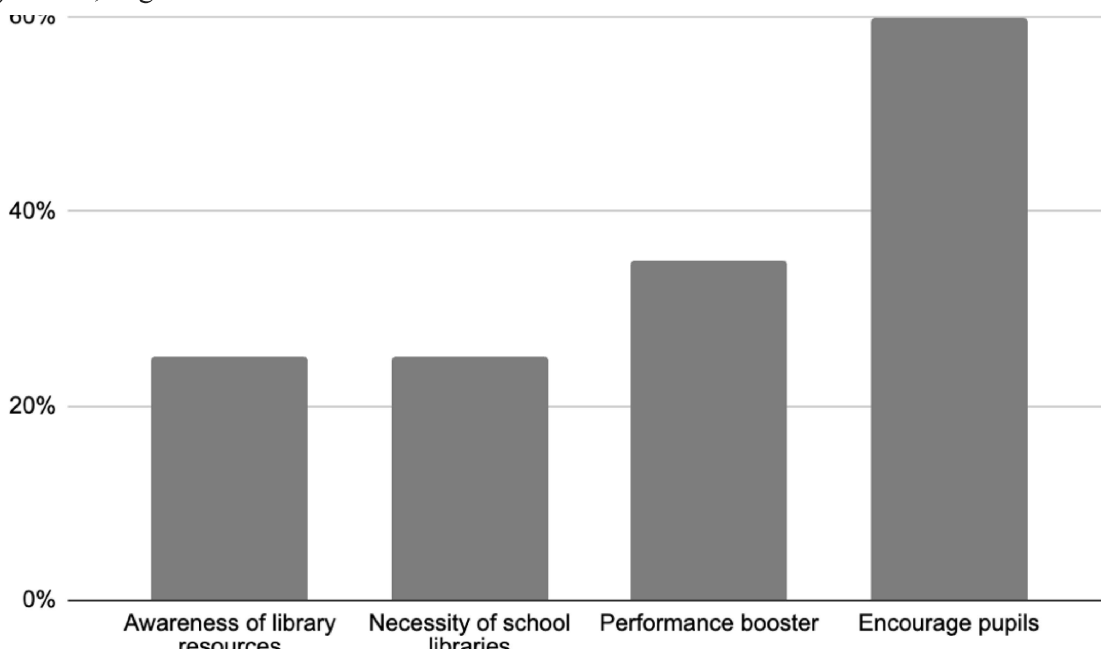


Figure 2: Early Childhood Educators' Perception of School Libraries

Figure 2 shows that 25% of respondents are aware of the library resources. The resources included printed materials such as textbooks, journals, and storybooks as well as non-printed resources like educational toys and access to the internet. 25% of respondents also agreed that schools should have libraries. Though the level of library usage by early childhood educators is low as indicated in Figure 1, Figure 2 shows that 35% of respondents attested that the library serves as performance booster for both the educators and the pupils. The chart also shows that 60% of respondents noted that they would encourage their pupils to use the school libraries.

In the findings of a related study, Omenyo (2016) posited that students and teachers appreciated the presence and function of the school library, acknowledging it as fundamental in every educational system especially at the basic school level. Furthermore, students and teachers actually used the library resources in spite of the fact that one of the challenges they encountered was the inadequacy of its stock.

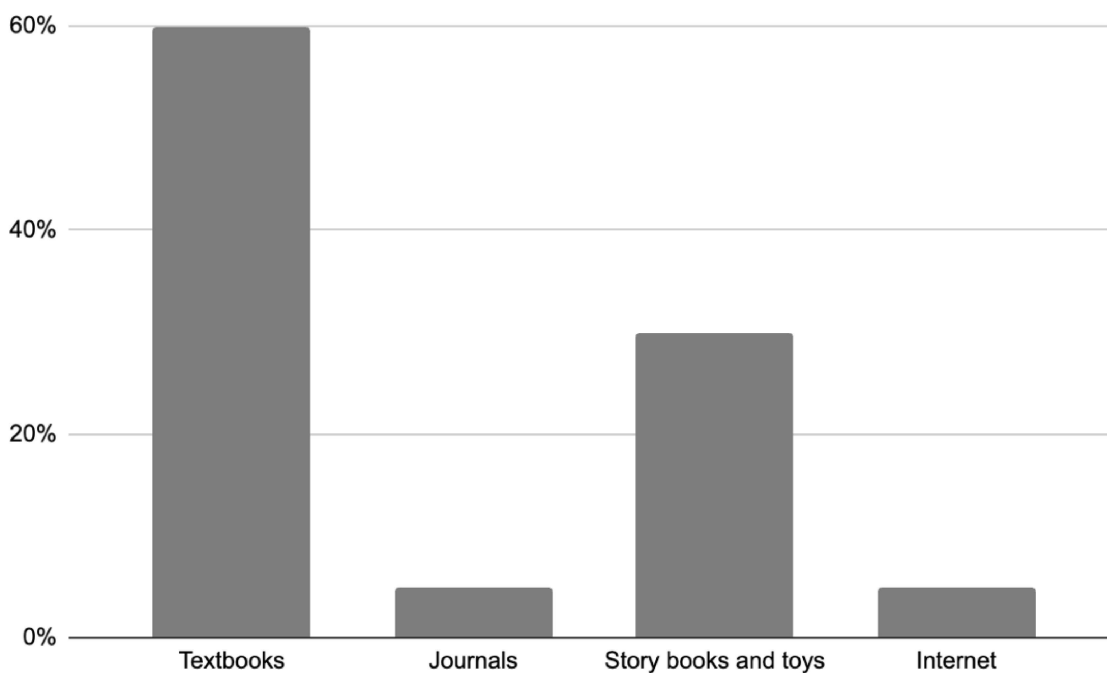


Figure 3: Assessment of the Use of School Library Resources by Early Childhood Educators

Figure 3 shows the percentage of early childhood educators that use some of the resources that can be found in school libraries. 60% of the respondents signified to using the textbooks in the libraries while 5% read journals. 30% used storybooks and toys in the library and 5% went to the library to connect to the internet.

CONCLUSION

Despite the low percentage of library use by early childhood educators in this study, a fair percentage indicated that they would encourage their pupils to use the library. This is another area for research

because it will be necessary to know why they would encourage their pupils when they do not use the libraries or consider it necessary for schools to have libraries for pupils in the early years category.

RECOMMENDATION

Early childhood educators should cultivate the habit of using the library, either in the school or elsewhere. Also, it was recommended that early childhood educators should have information literacy added to the curriculum or orientation during pre-service training.

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