



## AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COURSE OF STUDY AND NEWSPAPER READERSHIP PATTERN OF STUDENTS

NWAMARA, Chinedu A.<sup>1</sup>  
FAB-UKOZOR Nkem Ph.D<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri

<sup>2</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Imo State University, Owerri

**Corresponding author:** NWAMARA CHINEDU A., [nedunwamara@gmail.com](mailto:nedunwamara@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

This study was designed to ascertain the effect of students' course of study on their newspaper reading pattern as well as to identify factors that hinder students from reading newspapers. It is observed that many students in the institutions of higher learning do not read newspapers; hence this study seeks to confirm or verify that observation, and to find out if students' course of study affects their newspaper readership pattern. The researchers adopted the survey approach in the study. Data were collected through questionnaire distributed to a selected sample of 500 students at the Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri which has a population of 9,000 students. The data collected from the respondents were carefully analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages. The result shows that a large number of students do not read newspapers regularly, and that students' course of study greatly influence their newspaper reading habits. It was also discovered that poor reading culture is the biggest hindrance to reading of newspapers among students. The study also shows that online reading is the most convenient way of reading newspapers among students. The researchers therefore, recommend, among other things, that government and other relevant agencies should put in more efforts to encourage students to develop interest in reading of newspapers in particular and reading in general.

**Keywords:** Course of Study, Influence, Students, Newspaper, Reading Pattern.

### Introduction

Reading of newspapers is one of the major ways through which students should keep abreast of current affairs and political, social and economic trends in the world around them.

Akinfenwa (2019) revealed that Nigeria has been rated by the World Culture Score Index as one of the countries with the lowest reading culture in the world. A study carried out by Henry (2004) cited in Aina et al (2011) reveals that "40 percent of adult Nigerians never read a non-fiction book from cover to cover after they finish school. The average Nigerian reads less than one book per year, and only one per cent of successful men and women in Nigeria read one non-fiction book per month. The same study showed that 30 million Nigerians have graduated from high school with poor reading skills.

With the above revelations by Akinfenwa (2019) and Henry (2004), some people have expressed fears that the poor reading culture among Nigerians might affect the newspaper readership pattern of students in

tertiary institutions. In other words, these revelations seem to be in the same direction with the observation that many students do not read newspapers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to Akinfenwa (2019), Nigeria has been rated by the World Culture Score Index as one of the countries with the lowest reading culture in the world. It is widely believed that the poor reading culture in Nigeria has greatly affected the newspaper reading habit of students in tertiary institutions. In the face of the poor reading culture among Nigerians, there is a controversy as to whether the poor reading culture affects the newspaper readership pattern of students' and whether students course of study affect their newspaper readership pattern.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the researchers in collection of relevant data.

1. How often do students read newspapers?
2. What are the factors that hinder students from reading newspapers?
3. Does a student's course of study influence his newspaper reading pattern?
4. What type of story do students mostly read in the newspapers?
5. What is the most convenient way of reading newspapers among students?

### **Scope/Delimitation of the Study**

The study covered the attitude of Polytechnic students towards reading of newspapers, their newspapers reading patterns, their motivations and hindrances/handicaps in reading newspapers.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

In a study titled "Developing Reading Culture in Nigerian Society: Issues and Remedies", Ogugua et al (2015) noted that development of reading culture is faced with the challenges of language interference, poor funding of education and poor economy. In a related study titled "Newspaper Readership Pattern Among Nigerian University Students: Perspectives from Mass Communication Students" Apuke and Omar (2020) investigated newspaper readership among mass communication students in the Taraba State University, Jalingo. The study reveals that there is low newspaper readership among the students. It was also discovered that politics and sports are the major subjects of interest which the students often read in the newspapers.

However, a related study titled "Evaluation of Newspaper Reading Habits of Youths in Anambra State, Nigeria" conducted by Edegoh, et al (2015) shows that youths in Anambra State read newspapers a lot, and that the Sun, The Guardian, Complete Sports and The Vanguard are the newspapers they mostly read. Findings also reveal that sports, political and economic news are the major stories the youths read and that they obtain the newspapers they read mainly by going to newspaper stands to read free of charge, browsing newspapers with their cell phones, borrowing from friends and neighbours and by visiting the public libraries.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The uses and gratification theory is the theoretical framework for this study. This theory views the audience as active, meaning that they actively seek out specific media and content to achieve certain results or gratifications that satisfy their personal needs. The theory originated from the functionalist perspective on mass media communication. The uses and gratification theory argues that media content are used for gratifications of social or psychological needs of the individual. The theory was introduced by Elihu Katz when he came up with the

notion that people use the media to their benefits. According to this theory, the media does not use the audience but rather satisfy their needs. In other words, it is not the persuasive contents of media messages that influence people's attitude but the derivable benefits from such media contents as determined by the audience members. Konkwo (1999, p.303) obviously concurred to this when he stated that: The assumption that the reception of the contents of mass mediated message takes place in anticipation of some 'reward' forms the basis for the concept of the "uses and gratifications approach". This theory is therefore relevant to this study, especially as the study will explore students' attitude towards newspapers and newspaper contents.

### **Research Methodology**

In this study, the researchers used the survey research approach. Akakwandu (2015) defined survey research as a research method that is used to generate data about a defined group who are representatives of a larger group that is of interest to the researcher.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprises students of the Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri. The institution has a population of 9000 students the breakdown of which is as follows;

School of Business And Management Technology (SBMT)	-	3000
School of Engineering Technology (SET)	-	1500
School of Industrial and Applied Science (SIAS)	-	2,200
School of Environmental Design (SED)	-	1500
School of Humanities Social and Sciences (SHSS)	-	800
TOTAL	-	9,000

**SOURCE:** The Institution's Registry

### **Area of Study**

The place or geographical area of this study is the Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri. Nekede is surrounded by Ihiagwa in the East, Naze in the West, Owerri Municipal in the North and Obibiezena in the south.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

The sample size for this study is 500 students selected from the five schools (or faculties) in the Polytechnic.

The sample size was selected through quota sampling. Respondents were purposively selected from each faculty in such a way that all the departments in each faculty are proportionally represented. Hence, samples were selected as follows:

SBMT	-	140
SET	-	100
SIAS	-	100
SED	-	90
SHSS	-	70
Total	-	500

Data were collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire was presented to an experienced scholar for validation before administering it on respondents. To collect the research data, questionnaire were personally

An evaluation of the relationship between course of study and newspaper readership pattern of students.

distributed to students in their respective class rooms in each of the five schools in the Polytechnic. Because the questionnaire were administered and collected on the spot, the researchers were able to retrieve the entire number of questionnaire distributed.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

The research data were analyzed using simple percentages, frequency tables and inferential statistics.

**Table 1:** Respondents' Response to how often they read newspapers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regularly	175	35
Not regularly	280	56
Not at all	45	9
Total	500	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Analysis of data from table 1 reveals that 56% of respondents do not read newspaper often. By implication the respondents do not regularly read newspaper often.

**Table 2:** Respondents' Response to Factors that hinder students from reading newspapers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of time	150	30
Lack of interest in reading	210	42
Lack of easy access to newspapers	95	19
Lack of money	45	9
Total	500	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Analysis of data from table 2 shows that 42% of respondents lack interest in reading newspapers. This means that majority of the respondents lack interest in reading newspapers.

**Research Question 3:** Do you agree that your course of study influence your newspaper reading pattern?

**Table 3:** Respondents' Response to your course of study influences your newspaper reading pattern.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	115	23
Agree	195	39
Disagree	105	21
Strongly disagree	85	17
Total	500	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Analysis of data reveals that 39% of respondents agreed that their course of study influences their newspaper reading pattern. This implies that majority of the respondents confirmed that their course of study influences their newspaper reading pattern.

**Table 4:** Respondents' Response to types of newspaper story mostly read by students

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Political stories	75	15
Economic stories	25	5
Science and technology	30	6
Socio-cultural	50	10
Entertainment	130	26
Fashion	95	19
Sports	125	25
Educational	70	15
Total	500	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Analysis of data from table 4 reveals that 26% of respondents prefer entertainment news story in newspaper. This implies that the type of newspaper story respondents like reading is entertainment news story.

**Table 5:** Respondents' Response to most convenient way of reading newspaper

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Buying the newspapers	35	7
Free reading at the news stand	105	21
Reading at the library	110	22
Reading online	215	43
Borrowing the newspaper	35	7
Total	500	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Analysis of data from table 5 above reveals that 43% of respondents read newspaper online and it is the most convenient way of reading newspaper. This implies that the most convenient way of reading newspaper as confirmed by the respondents is online reading.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In table 1 above, 175 students representing 35 percent of the respondents said that they read newspapers regularly. A total of 280 students or 56% of the respondents admitted that they do not read newspapers regularly while 45 students or 9% of the respondents said they do not read newspapers at all. The implication of this result is that a large number of students do not read newspapers frequently. However, the result shows that a significant number of students read newspapers regularly.

In table 2 above, the result shows that lack of interest in reading (or poor reading culture) tops the list among the factors that hinder students from reading newspapers. This is followed by lack of time. Surprisingly, lack of money came as the least factor that hinders students from reading newspapers. This implies that there is the need to help students develop interest in reading of newspapers.

In table 3 above, a total of 310 students representing 62% of the respondents claim that their course of study influences their newspaper reading pattern. A department-by-department analysis of the research data revealed that 100 percent of the respondents in mass communication and public administration departments each strongly agreed that their courses of study influence their newspaper readership pattern. In the case of mass Communication department, the 100 percent response of the respondents may be attributed to the fact that they use newspapers as part of their resource materials and for practical assignments. In the case of public administration department, the 100 percent response of their respondents may be as a result of the fact that their lecturers discuss a lot of current national issues with them in the class. This result confirms the belief in some quarters that students in some disciplines are more likely to read newspapers than students in other disciplines.

Table 4 revealed that entertainment and sports constitute the mostly read type of stories among students. Surprisingly, educational stories did not make the list of the three mostly read types of story among students. This implies that students should be encouraged to develop more interest in reading educational stories that can supplement their classroom lectures.

In table 5, the result shows that online reading of newspapers tops the list as the most convenient way of reading newspapers among students. This is followed by reading at the institution's library and free reading at the news stand in the campus. This implies that provision of internet facilities in various parts of the campus would be a welcome development to the students.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that a student's course of study greatly influence his or her newspaper reading pattern. Though a great number of students read newspapers regularly, a large number of students still do not read newspapers frequently and some do not read at all. Many factors hinder students from reading newspapers, and the biggest of such factors is lack of interest in reading.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Relevant government agencies and corporate organizations should introduce result oriented measures to help students develop interest in reading of newspapers in particular and other literatures in general.
2. Students, irrespective of their course of study, should be encouraged to read newspapers regularly.
3. Since online reading is the most convenient way of reading newspapers among students, the management of tertiary institutions should provide internet facilities at various parts of the campus to enable the students have easy access to newspapers online.
4. Students are encouraged to read other areas of newspaper and not streamline their interest only on entertainment news. Rather reading other areas such as news, will lead to positive exposure.
5. Students should also be encouraged to develop more interest in reading educational stories in newspapers as this will supplement their classroom lectures.

## REFERENCES

- Aina, A.J., Ogungbeni, J.I., Adigun, J.A., Akesode, F.A. & Ogundipe, T.C. (2011). *Poor reading habits among Nigerians: the role of libraries*. [www.researchgate.net/publication/267846785...](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/267846785...)
- Akakwandu, C. (2015). *Mass communication research*. Izehi Printing Press.
- Akinfenwa, K. (2019). *Addressing the poor reading culture in Nigeria*. [www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/03/30](http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/03/30).
- Apuke, O.D. & Omar, B. (2020). *Newspaper readership pattern among Nigerian university students: perspective from mass communication students*. [www.researchgate.net/publication/338975095](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/338975095).
- Edegoh, L.O.N, Ezech, N.C. & Samson, A.C. (2015). Evaluation of newspaper reading habits of youths in Anambra State, Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 37, 2015, pp. 63-71.
- Ejigini-Kelechi, A. (2016). Dearth of reading culture among Nigerians: the implication for future of Nigerian education system. In *Synergy* 1 (1), 51-56.
- Konkwo, J. (1990). The uses and gratification approach and the concept of the “active public in mass communication research. in Ikechukwu Nwosu (ed.) *Mass communication and national development: Perspective on communication environment and development in Nigeria*. Aba: Frontier Publishers Ltd.
- Nworgu, K. (2010). Mass communication research. In K.O. Nworgu (ed). *Mass communication theory & practice*. Ultimate Books.
- Ogomaka, P.M.C., (2002). *Towards uniformity in research proposals & reports*. Cape Publishers ltd.
- Ogugua, J.C. Emerole, N., Egwim, F.O., Anyanwu, A.I. & Haco-Obasi, F. (2015). Developing a reading culture in Nigerian society: issues and remedies. *JORIND* 13(1), June 2015. [www.transcampus.org/journal](http://www.transcampus.org/journal).