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## TEACHERS' AND PARENTS' ROLE IN IMPROVING READING CULTURE

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### ABSTRACT

Reading culture can be explained as a learned practice of seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through the written word. Such practice can be acquired by reading books, magazines, newspaper etc. Having a reading culture has become imperative in the 21st century for everybody, especially the children who are the future of the nation. To participate effectively in children is the task that we must take very seriously. This should be the primary goal of institution heads, teachers, parents and the communities at large. The major objective of this study was to assess the causes of non-reading culture in Jolencio R. Alberca Elementary School in Digos City, and how teachers and parents can contribute to improve reading culture in schools. Hence the research has been contributed to uncover some of the root problems which make a child not interested in reading. Ten (10) teachers and eighteen (18) learners have been chosen as participants to give the detailed information as to what they can do to help. Factors such as lack of motivation, insufficient parental guidance and financial constraints among others were identified as the major root causes.

**Key words:** Non-reading culture, learners, teachers, elementary schools, causes, roles

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading culture can best be explained as learned practices seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through the written word. Such practice can be acquired by reading books, journals, magazines, newspaper and internet. Having a reading culture has become imperative in the 21st century for everybody, especially the children, who are the future of the nation. To participate effectively in children is the task that we must take very seriously. This should be the primary goal of institutional, heads, teachers, parents, and our communities at large. The declining interest in reading exhibited by our children today is the cause for and challenge for all. Reading culture is a culture where reading is valued highly and a habit among its members.

Reading is obviously one of the basic things a child begins to do in the early stage of the formal education, within the school building. Some children also learn to read from the parents even before they start schooling. It is through reading that children boarded their understanding of life.

Reading opens up a whole new world from which to see themselves and others. Reading enables creativity to blossom in the child. It gives them the tools to explore their talent while learning about themselves and their societies. The English philosopher, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) once asserted that reading maketh a full man. Speaking ...ready man while writing maketh him exact."

This assertion has never been proved otherwise. Great readers have always made great writers as history, autobiographies and biographies of great men have taught us. It is therefore, proper to say that those who can read definitely have an advantage over those who cannot. In other words "Readers are Leaders"

Reading culture among Kenyan children in modern culture There is no doubt that the reading culture among Kenyan children is the tragically deficient in comparison to other Western nations. One can even say that the past generation of Kenya – our fathers and grandfathers had a remarkable thirst for knowledge through education despite the scarce resources that they contended with.

They had a better appreciation of the value of education as a better appreciation of the value of education as a status symbol. There are examples of parent who deprive themselves of everything to see to the education of their children, a situation was also economically and financially viable or rewarding. Thus, to know how to read for its own sake is an invaluable asset.

Sadly enough, this is not the case among many Kenyan children in the 21st century. The importance of reading for its own sake has taken a bad hit and reading culture has steady decline over the years. What is the source of this problem? Who do we blame? Is it our parents, children, education system, or the nation? What happen to the Kenyan child of the old and that love for reading so well exemplified by the past of generation?

The aim of the study was to explore the possible causes of non-reading culture in schools and roles played by teachers and parents in contributing and promoting reading culture among learners. Why is a child no longer interested in reading except when he/she is sitting for an examination? Why the lack of interest in knowledge for knowledge sake? Indeed, this poses a problem for the future of our nation. The researcher would like to uncover some of the roots of this problem so that they can begin a modest search for remedy. Hence following objectives will guide this study.

Objectives of the study are to assess the causes of non-reading culture in schools; to determine the parents' and teachers' role on promoting reading culture; and to determine how teachers and parents can contribute to improve reading culture in schools.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the causes of non-reading culture in the school?
2. What are the roles of the teachers and parents on promoting reading culture in the school?
3. What can the teachers and parents contribute to improve the reading culture in the school?

Reading literacy is not only a cognitive issue. It also covers non-cognitive aspects, such as reading attitudes and practices. Most current models of reading achievement or reading acquisition consider both reading practices and reading attitudes or motivation to be key factors related to reading (Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, and Barr, 2020; McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 2019). For Guthrie and Wigfield (2021), motivation is the link between frequent reading and reading achievement. Motivation to read mediates the so-called "Matthew effect" (Stanovich, 2019), which refers to the circular relationship between practice and achievement. Better readers tend to read more because they are motivated to read, which leads to improved vocabulary and better skills. As a result, the gap between good and poor readers grows over time

The National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States has reported an interesting study (Campbell, Voelkl and Donahue, 2022) which demonstrates the connection between achievement and engagement in reading. Not surprisingly, the more highly engaged readers showed higher achievement than the less engaged at each of the three ages studied (9, 13 and 17-year-olds). In addition, the 13-year-old learners with higher reading engagement demonstrated higher average scores in reading achievement than the 17-year-olds who were less engaged in reading. The same national data indicate that engaged readers from low income/education families have higher achievement than less engaged readers from high income/education backgrounds. According to Guthrie and Wigfield, (2021) "As learners become engaged readers, they provide themselves with self-generated learning opportunities that are equivalent to several years of education. Engagement in reading may substantially compensate for low family income and educational background."

Empirical studies have also documented the link between reading practices, reading motivation and reading achievement among adults. In the final IALS report (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2019), the amount of reading activity at work and at home is shown to be positively related to the level of reading literacy. Although these variables seem to play a less important role than level of education among an adult population, in some countries (such as Chile and Flemish Belgium), reading practices emerge as one of the four principal factors influencing level of literacy.

Reading capacity among children in African countries is among the lowest in the world. Limited resources, lack of reading materials and encouragement by some African governments adversely affect the reading culture throughout most of Africa. Inside Africa's Reading Expeditions is a multi-year initiative that focuses on promoting reading among children in Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, Sierra-Leone, Zimbabwe and Zambia. (World Pulse, 2019)

Anjao Anne (2018), conducted a survey to find out a public's reaction to having a magnificent library in the city of Kigali – Rwanda, and to the culture of reading in Rwanda. The researcher found out that 78% of the respondents had not set foot inside Kigali public library even though 55% knew that the library is there.

A commonly cited reason for our weak reading culture is the reliance on the spoken word. It is often argued that our lack of interest in reading is attributable to our strong oral tradition. Now, there is no denying that in the absence of written records, we developed a highly effective oral tradition. This was necessary for survival. Without the luxury of written diaries, notes and reminders, we had no alternative but to commit all important matters to memory.

Others have argued that the reason we do not read is because we cannot afford to buy books. This argument is clearly a non-starter. One has only to observe the amount of money that people spend in bars, restaurants and other places of entertainment to see that poverty is not the real issue. It is more a question of priorities, a question of values than of affordability. True, people need to have provided for some basics before they get to the level where they can buy and read books. No one is likely to sacrifice daily bread for books. The priority here too is clear. However, one does not have to have money to develop a healthy reading habit. Public and private libraries exist to take care of these needs. But it is surprising how few people visit these institutions for the purpose of reading or checking out books. All this seems to say that the problem is deeper than money. It is a question of attitude more than affordability. (Mbae G. Justus, 2019).

One person who believed that the ordinary person should hook up with the reading culture apparently was Mr Hermengild Maganja, a Director of National Library Services. He said that the reading culture is on the kick off, "we are still the results of a developing world on education and culture, but we should still borrow the reading virtues our European friends have."

He says that we are reaping the results of lateness and the no reading culture vicious cycle should be cut and wiped out completely. The habit of one waiting to read when they are under pressure like for examinations or research is still looming widely, not only among the young people in learning institutions but even the working professionals. The difference between Europe and Asia is that people here sleep in buses, on trains and during their flights where as in Europe people read while in buses, on trains and flights as well. Maganja adds that education is achievement oriented where people cram in order to pass their exams. Some even claim that there is no money in reading "Scholars read when they are yet to have examinations or research." He observes that majority of learners get introduced to library services only when they get into secondary school, which is not the best system to promote a generally reading and knowledgeable society.

There are three main theories which explain the nature of learning to read. First the traditional theory or bottom up processing theory which focused on printed form of a text. Second, the cognitive view, or top-down processing enhanced the role of background knowledge in addition to what appeared on the printed page. Third, the metacognitive view, which is based on the control and manipulation that a reader can have on the act of comprehending a text, and thus, emphasizes the involvement of the reader's thinking about what he is doing while reading.

The traditional bottom-up view. The traditional bottom-up approach to reading was influenced by behaviorist psychology of the 1950s, which claimed learning was based upon "habit formation, brought about by the repeated association of a stimulus with a response" and language learning was characterized as a "response system that humans acquire through automatic conditioning processes," where "some patterns of language are reinforced (rewarded) and others are not," and "only those patterns reinforced by the community of language users will persist" (Omaggio, 2019). Behaviorism became the basis of the audio-lingual method, which sought to form second language "habits" through drilling, repetition, and error correction.

The Cognitive View (top-down processing). In the 1960s a paradigm shift occurred in the cognitive sciences. Behaviorism became somewhat discredited as the new cognitive theory represented the mind's innate capacity for learning, which gave new explanatory power to how humans acquired their first language; this also had a tremendous impact on the field of ESL/EFL as psycholinguists explained "how such internal representations of the foreign language develop within the learner's mind" (Omaggio, 2019).

Schema Theory. Another theory closely related to top-down processing called schema theory also had a major impact on reading instruction. It describes in detail how the background knowledge of the learner interacts with the reading task and illustrates how a student's knowledge and previous experience with the world is crucial to deciphering a text. The ability to use this schemata, or background knowledge, plays a fundamental role in one's trial to comprehend a text. Schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help a reader make sense of new experiences.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the qualitative research design to accomplish and achieve the objectives. Qualitative design is undertaken to find out whether any experiences exists on what is happening. In this study therefore the researcher tried to establish the causes of non-reading culture and its effect by reflecting the key role played by teachers and parents. A total of 28 participants completed the questionnaires from 10 teachers and 18 parents of learners who were identified as being related to the subject matter. The context of research happened to be within the context of reading culture due to its uniqueness in education sector. The data was coded and analyzed using phenomenological analysis as the primary statistical technique to build structure. Data was analyzed and presented in narratives and themes.

The study was carried out in Jolencio R. Alberca Elementary School in Digos City. The major issues covered were the causes of non-reading culture as well as teachers and parents' role in improving reading culture. The strategies on how to improve reading culture in schools has also been covered. The study covered a period of school year 2022-2023.

The study involved grades 4, 5 and 6 learners who have pursued reading after they have gone through the Mother Tongue. The experiences of 18 learners and their parents were gathered; on the other hand, 10 teachers were interviewed for the study. A total of 28 participants are involved in the study. The students were coded as P1 to P18; the teachers were coded as Teacher 1 to Teacher 10.

In qualitative research, data are collected with a focus on multifaceted interviews and narratives to produce a description of the experiences. The researchers, therefore, play the role of a mediator between the experiences of the respondents and the community of concerned people (Bloor, 2020; Todres, 2022). The post-interview comment sheet could assist the researcher to note the feelings of informants, as well as interpretations and comments that occurred during the interview (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2021).

Data collection needs to be as overt as possible, and findings should be recorded. Although there is no guarantee of absolute confidentiality, openly recording field notes assists participants to decide what they wish to have on the record. In health care research, the problem may be even more exaggerated as the researcher is sometimes the health provider as well (Tolich, 2019).

Qualitative analysis is the analysis of qualitative data such as text data from interview transcripts. Unlike quantitative analysis, which is statistics driven and largely independent of the researcher, qualitative analysis is heavily dependent on the researcher's analytic and integrative skills and personal knowledge of the social context where the data is collected. The emphasis in qualitative analysis is "sense making" or understanding a phenomenon, rather than predicting or explaining. A creative and investigative mindset is needed for qualitative analysis, based on an ethically enlightened and participant-in-context attitude, and a set of analytic strategies. This chapter provides a brief overview of some of these qualitative analysis strategies. Interested readers are referred to more authoritative and detailed references such as Miles and Huberman's (2019) seminal book on this topic.

This study uses content analysis in deciphering and interpretation of its collected data. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. As an example, researchers can evaluate language used within a news article to search for bias or partiality. Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text.

Sources of data could be from interviews, open-ended questions, field research notes, conversations, or literally any occurrence of communicative language (such as books, essays, discussions, newspaper headlines, speeches, media, historical documents). A single study may analyze various forms of text in its analysis. To analyze the text using content analysis, the text must be coded, or broken down, into manageable code categories for analysis (i.e. "codes"). Once the text is coded into code categories, the codes can then be further categorized into "code categories" to summarize data even further.

### 3. RESULT

Causes of non-reading culture in the school

In answering the factors affecting poor reading culture among learners of the school, the participants mentioned the following causes:

In the school, learners think that they want to get certifications. This mindset is a big problem they think when they get a certification, that's at the highest point of the desires and goals there is nothing more too. Some learners think the textbooks are enough but that is not enough they should follow more

A part of this is the responsibility of the teachers they do not push and encourage the students to go and research other books. They do not be great at marks. You know they behind marks, look after marks. So, the teacher may not give them this mark to follow the desire of reading books. They provide providing handouts and pamphlets to their students.

Students do not provide much time for reading books; they read books for less than an hour per day. Philippine culture, lack of role models, insufficient libraries, and handouts of lectures provided by lecturers are among factors of poor reading culture among learners; cultural environment demotivates them to read. However, families motivate them to read.

There are appropriate places for reading at schools and library staff are helpful. But there are not sufficient types of books in university libraries. Learners do not use e-books, and they do not have access to e-books. Hence e-book is not a reliable and familiar version of books to learners. Most of the students read for pleasure. and teachers motivate students to read more.

Roles of the teachers and parents in promoting reading culture of the school

Parents' responsibility. Many partners are involved in developing a reading culture. In order to develop and maintain a reading culture in a society, the theoretical overview emphasizes a strong collaboration and partnership among parents, teachers, government, private sector, and civil society organizations. If parents do not read to their children, the latter, in turn, will not read to their children because you cannot give what you do not have. Findings from the studies with students in tertiary education and parents respectively show little support from the parents and little awareness with regard to their role and responsibility for inculcating reading habits into their children at an early age. This cycle goes on and on. In fact, this agrees with the English saying that readers beget readers and that a reading parent gets a reading child! This is why parents stand the best chance when it comes to nurturing a reading culture.

Teachers' responsibility. The findings of the study with teachers show the need to sensitize parents and the community, and provide information on and awareness of their role in creating a rich emergent literacy environment for their children's literacy growth at home. In addition, the participants advocate that links and collaboration between parents, families, and teachers need to be strengthened so as to promote, foster, and enhance the much needed emergent literacy for children both at home and at school. This indeed holds as research provides for its potential stimulus for accelerated growth of children's early and later literacy development (Paratore, Cassano, & Schickedanz, 2021; Smit et al. 2019; Epstein 2021). Teachers also play, a pivotal role in helping children to develop and maintain a positive attitude towards literacy learning and reading. To motivate children to read, teachers should demonstrate a passion for reading and act as model readers for their students. Finally, by providing opportunities for discussion, teamwork, and other social interactions that make reading interesting and fun (Paratore, Cassano, & Schickedanz, 2021; Dickinson & Smith, 2019; Coladarci, 2019), children can learn to reflect on texts, read between the lines and challenge their own and others' thinking.

Teachers' and parents' contributions to improve the reading culture in the school

The task of improving and developing reading culture is important for all organs in the society including the family, teachers, librarians, religious people, independent organizations, and the government, etc. The strategies include establishment of family libraries; activities in the school; promotion by parental activities; reinforcement of reading materials; and reading assignments.

#### **Analysis**

As far as causes of non-reading culture are concern the study concludes that there are several causes which contribute to non-reading culture. Among them were lack of motivation among students, from teachers as well as parents, lack of parental guidance and encouragement, and poor economic and low standard of living. When children are not motivated and encouraged they lose the psyche of reading. Parents who are poor struggle to meet the basic needs and do not bother about reading when the basic needs are not met. Some parents even end up using their children in looking for money to supplement the family income. However parents should encourage children by providing them the required books to read at home and help them finish the home works provided. Those with access to modern technology like the internet should closely guide them on how to use it. On the parents/sponsors' role on promoting reading culture, it was found that parents or sponsors can play a great role in promoting reading culture. They can follow up the progress of their children and encourage them on the significance of reading, they should understand their children's problems in relation to social and economic factors, they should reduce household work to their children by providing them more time to do their personal studies and they should also participate in improving infrastructure in schools. Kapongola 2019 opines that 'Walk the talk' – that's his advice to parents. If they want their children to read, be a reader. Children will love reading only if they see adults around them are doing the same. Opting for a book against a computer and TV is a challenging fact at our present times. As parents, we should take note of this and help our kids to overcome the challenge. The amount of reading activity at work and at home is shown to be positively related to the level of reading literacy (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2020).

Teachers have a major role to play in order to contribute and improve reading culture in schools. First they can provide regular assessment to students; second, they can give reference book reviews and other relevant materials to be read outside class as well as home; third they can encourage parents to reinforce students with reading materials; fourth, they can offer incentives to students and fifth, they can look to the community for support for schools and request the government to employ more teachers in schools. There should be a revival of reading culture among children that have potential of exceeding that of past generations. It can be made possible if all hands are put together working with a goal in mind about obtaining reading culture. This can be achieved by the parents, teachers, students, Governments, and our communities at large with a vision of better future for our children.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Parents need to be cognizant of the role of the first most sensitive agent of a child's socialization They need to play more active roles in the aim to increase the reading habit of their children, they need to help reduce their attachment to gadgets and information technology, buy them books as gifts, surround them with the love of books and help them grow up with their thoughts of reading in their heart. There is a huge need to add librarianship to the school curriculum. The earlier the younger kids are introduced to reading, the more likely they will be to keep on reading even while they grow older. The Libraries are essential instruments for promoting reading culture as they serve recreational centers and provide creative development to the children and local adults by availing recreational reading books for their personality development and spiritual growth in their leisure time. Schools need to work on improving

their library standards. The government should put forth more funds, not just into education, but into bringing back the libraries. They need to find a way of encouraging the promotion of publishing books at reduced prices to make them affordable for people to buy and read. The government should become role models having positive impacts in the life of these teens. Teachers can help encourage teens to read as custodians of teens, they have better knowledge of their students and would know easy successful ways of getting each teen to read. A Kenyan school started the practice of giving its students books to read during the holidays and on return there would discussions on the books Schools can encourage book clubs not tests but for discussions and leisure and to encourage interaction. Reading builds confidence and teens need that.

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