



GENDER VARIATION IN READING HABITS IN SCHOOLS IN MOLAND: A CASE STUDY OF ASANTEKWAA S.D. A. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract:

The paper was to investigate gender variation in reading habits in schools in Moland: using Asantekwaa S.D. A. Junior High School in the Kintampo Municipality of Ghana as a case study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from one hundred and forty four (144) students who were randomly selected for the study. The findings of the study disclosed that females have higher positive attitudes towards reading than their males counterparts. The study recommended that teachers should draw programmes that will attract and encourage students to engage in effective reading habits. The school management and parents association should harness resources to set up a library in the school since a library is part of a school system which serves as a store house of knowledge.

Keywords: gender variations, Ghana, Junior high, Moland, reading habit

1. Introduction

Reading plays a pivotal role in all spheres of academic levels such as Primary, junior high, senior high and tertiary institution. Effective and good reading practices empower one to stand tall in public when reading to one's audience. Reading brings about creativity and helps to develop the creative side of the brain as it introduces innovation into the thinking process of an individual. The habits of reading build the vocabulary of

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the reader by exposing him or her to new words and phrases which allow him or her to write and speak better. Reading proficiency is the key to knowledge. In modern life, reading depends on the individual capacity to interpret printed pages fully and accurately. Reading has personal values: it is the door to almost all vocations such that the mechanical worker on the factory floor needs to read some basic material like rules and regulations governing operation on the factory floor. He or she has to read signs and or change regulations. Failure to read can lead to industrial accidents. Many industrial accidents have been attributed to the lack of non-reading ability. It is important that reading skills should be taught right from primary school to enable everybody to have an appreciable reading ability. Readers find consolation in books when they are sad or faced with a problem because books are full of numerous consolatory words. Recreational reading can provide enough hours of varied enjoyment. When one is reading a story purely for pleasure, the tendency is to be more relaxed with an uneven speed. Recreational reading can provide insight into the behaviour of other people. Reading takes the reader on journeys into unknown parts of the world and also allows the reader to share the experiences of people throughout history.

In a work carried by the International Reading Association (Moore et al, 1999) that has been cited in Clark and Rumbold (2006), states that: *“Adolescence entering the grown-up world in the 21st Century will read and compile more than at any other time in mankind’s history. They will call for various levels of education to play out their jobs, run their family units, act as subjects, and direct their own lives. They will require proficiency to adapt to the flow of data they will discover wherever they turn. They will require proficiency to sustain their creative energies so they can make the universe without limits”*.

Research conducted by the Canadian Council on Learning (2009) reports that *“boys’ gendered attitudes towards reading keep them from reading as frequently as girls”*. Males and females exhibit different states of mind towards reading, some of which may be a direct result of the distinctive reading inclinations that every gender possesses. In the light of this dissimilarity, it is essential to see how males and females select books in view of their interests and capacities, which thus can propel them to wind up distinctly better readers.

Özbay (2006) reports that an individual reading preference differs in terms of interest, thought, aptitudes and condition. Reading interest, curiosity, or preference is by all accounts diverse with males and females having distinctive reading propensities and reading aptitudes to such an extent that females appreciate reading more than males.

Dilshad, Adnan, and Akram (2013) investigated gender differences in the reading habits of university students and concluded that reading habits of males and females students were somewhat different which is in line with the findings of

Frankenstein (2009) which reports that boys and girls have distinctive options with regards to reading. Shafi and Loan (2010) intimate that gender is a central point affecting students' reading habits and that female student are superior to male students in terms of reading habits.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

One of the enthralling phenomena which are heartrending in Ghanaian formal education today is poor reading habits of students in junior high students. The researchers observe that there is variation between boys and girls with respect to their reading habits. This variation causes a gap in gender participation in academic activities at Asantekwa S.D.A. Junior High School and in general junior high schools in Moland. No research has been conducted on gender variation in reading habits in junior high schools in Moland and particularly at Asantekwa S.D.A. Junior High School. However, the few related studies on this subject were conducted elsewhere by Ladipo & Gbotosho (2015); Dilshad, Adnan & Akram (2013), and in Ghana by Acheaw and Larson (2014). It is against this backdrop that, the present study was carried out to investigate gender variations in reading habits and fill in the gap created.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to investigate gender variation in reading habits among junior high school students in Moland and in particular at Asantekwa Junior High School in Kintampo North District.

1.3 Objective of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- a) to find out gender attitudes on reading habits
- b) to investigate the frequency of gender engaging in reading
- c) to determine the type of materials students read
- d) to find out factors militating against reading

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender attitudes towards reading habits

Clark and Foster (2005) are of the view that female students have a more positive mind than their male counterparts towards reading. They intimate that male students read extra to get an enviable job in future while female students read for entertainment only and for some break.

Iqbal and Shehzadi (2002) in a study in Pakistan revealed that female students lacked healthy study habits as well as effective reading skills.

Reading habit is a key ingredient in the life of a student since it can leave a positive effect on the student. Acquisition of knowledge is imperative in the life of an individual. However, it must be useful knowledge, must encourage a male or female to get on in a profession and pass an examination.

Clark, Torsi and Strong (2005) report in their studies that males and females have infinitely different reading interests. The findings of Bas (2012) on reading attitudes of high school students report that students express a significant difference according to gender variable in favour of female students. "Research from the United States, England, and Australia has suggested that boys are less likely than girls to read for leisure or for academics as they grow into their teenage years (Love & Hamston, 2003)". Pillai (2012) reports that there is a major difference in the study habits of male and female students. Research done by various researchers indicates that female students do better academically than their male counterparts and that they (females) acquire good study habits and attitudes (Tinklin, 2003; Hong & Lee, 2000; Anton & Angel, 2004; Houtte, 2004; Sud & Sujatha, 2006)

The studies of Gambell and Hunter (1999), Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez, & Kennedy (2003), Meece, Glienke, & Burg (2006) divulge that females and males vary in terms of reading habits, attitudes and also measure of inspiration. According to them females normally exhibit positive attitudes towards reading, displaying more positive reading self-concept and involving themselves regularly in reading practices outside the school environment.

Both national and international findings on reading habit among males and females disclosed that females have higher reading achievement than their male counterparts (Wagemaker, 1996; Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez & Kennedy, 2003; Perie, Grieg, & Donahue, 2006). Similarly, Moyes (2000) reiterates that male students spend the majority of their time in sporting activities while female spend much of theirs in reading. Bozak (2011; Logan & Johnston, 2009, 2010; Lai, 2010; Watson et al, 2010; Below et al, 2010; Statistique Canada, 2010) indicate in their studies that females are good readers and as a result are likely to have higher scores on reading test than their males counterparts. Logan and Johnston (2009, 2010) are of the view that females use various reading methods differently and are more active in reading than males do.

2.2 Frequency of students engaging in reading

Szarina (1995) did a study in reading habits and interests among students in Malaysia High Learning Institutions including Institute of Teknologi MARA and Tunku Abdul Rahman College.

The results showed that the majority of the respondents representing 64.4% read newspapers daily, followed by 45.4% who read lecture notes daily. The respondents also read general knowledge books or non - fiction books between 1-3 days monthly. It

was reported that the respondents read textbooks, magazines, journals between 1-3 days weekly. Shen (2006) investigated 124 students on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at a University in Southern Taiwan. It was found that 83.9% of the students read online information often every day, followed by 31.4% who read newspapers and 33.1% read magazines often every day.

The work of Nestle Family Monitor (2003) on Public School across England Wales revealed that 83% of the students read books in their free time, followed by 16% reading books every day, 11 % of the respondents indicated that they never read books after closing of school

Moradman (2010) carried out a study on factors contributing to preventing leisure reading focused on male and female students in Teacher Training University of Azerbaijan. The findings indicated that students read 30minutes per day for pleasure on average.

Su-Yen Chen (2007) investigated on the extracurricular reading habits of college students in Taiwan and found that the male students spent more average time on extracurricular reading than their female counterparts but there was a vast variation found among males.

The National Endowments Arts (2007) reported that in United States of America 15-24 years old students in high schools and college spend 7 minutes reading on weekdays while 10minutes on weekends on the average. In contrast, they spend 2 ½ hours per day viewing television (NEA Report, 2007).

2.3 Types of materials student read

Acheaw and Larson (2014) carried out on reading habit among students and its effect on academic performance at Koforidua Polytechnic in Ghana. Their study reported that 62.5% of the respondents are reading novel or fiction books, followed by 14.9% who indicated that they learn new things, 10.1% said that it is for imagination of things, 8.5% expressed that reading complements their studies and 4% reported that reading keep them from becoming bored, another 62.0% of the respondents highlighted that they read lecture notes when they visit the library facility while 25.0% said they read textbooks.

Azura (2006) undertook a study on reading habits and interests among the students from Faculty of Information Management in Universiti Teknologi Mara. The results reported that 30% of the respondents like to read topics on entertainment, followed by 18% who enjoyed reading materials on technology, 17% read on sports, another 15% read religious materials. The minority of the students read politics 6% and 1% read engineering materials. On the kind of materials, it was disclosed that 27% of the respondents read newspapers, 21% read academic books while 17% enjoy reading magazines, followed by 16% who read comics and 14% read novels.

Annamali and Muniandy (2013) did a similar study on reading habit and attitudes among Malaysian polytechnics students. Their findings reported that 68.9% of the respondents read newspapers daily for at least a few times and 57.1% read magazines. The author concluded based on the findings that polytechnic students do not have much interest reading as much as they like holding themselves in other technology-based activity. Croston (2005) confirmed in his study that students are interested in reading famous, books containing scary stories, mysterious and other popular stories outside school environments. In the views of Williams (2008; Davila & Patrick, 2010) females have a much greater preference for reading fiction books as well as romantic stories, emotion, pets, horses, plays and animal stories. Shelley-Robinson (2001) results were similar to that of Williams (2008; Davila & Patrick, 2010) studies that female students usually prefer stories that involved romance, family issues, adult, social empathy, lyrics song, poetry and interpersonal relationships. According to them, females like reading funny, frightening and adventure – based fiction stories as much as males.

Shelley-Robinson (2001) opines that informational materials and books that occasionally exhibit aggressive behaviour, physical activities among characters, and much expectation is chosen by male students. Again, males are always anxious to read books that pertaining to war, sporting events, adventure, science, machines, and inventions. The study of Shelley-Robinson (2001) on the interests that male students display in terms of reading appear to disagree with Atkinson (2006; Davila & Patrick, 2010) who established that male student like reading newspapers.

According to Akinson (2006) highlighted that reasons for male students interests are unknown but might be ascribed to the specific choice that male students possess. Williams (2008) was of the view that females like reading books that portray prominent Africa leaders, their characters and that female were twice as likely as a male accomplice to select these books.

Farris et al.(2009; Williams, 2008; Duthie, Larsen & Nippold, 2005) concurred in their various studies that males like to read comic strips, magazines, frightening stories, books containing fact, information materials, brief passages that were held by either photographs or cartoon pictures.

2.4 Factors Militating Against Students Reading Habits

Below, Skinner, Fearington and Sorell (2010) study revealed that environmental condition, cultural, socio-economic status and family influence emerged as factors that influence gender differences in regard to reading achievements. Scale and Rhee (2001) reported that students' gender, race, and educational background are the factors that determine reading habit and pattern. In related studies by Shah and Saleem (2010) enumerated some poor reading factors as low literacy rate, lack of reading orientation,

poor education system, lack of well-stocked library, lack of serene reading environment and inadequate motivational package for library staff. Canadian Council on Learning (2009) stated that “boys’ gendered attitudes towards reading keep them from reading as frequently as girls.” It is generally assumed that socioeconomic status is a major player in students’ academic performance. Suleman, Aslam, Shakir, Akhtar, Hussain, Akhtar,(2012) buttressed that parental socioeconomic level, educational background, profession and income level affects the academic performance of students at secondary school level. Rajendra et al. (2009) examined the nature of the family, joint and nuclear does not have any important influence on students reading habits with regard to home condition, note taking, planning, and focusing and general study habits.

The study of Haugh (2004) reported that “*poor literacy skills, cultural factors, peer influence, inadequate supplies of suitable reading material, an overloaded curriculum and the constant competition from multi-channel television and the World Wide Web (WWW) are only a few of the many factors that militated against the idea of children reading for pleasure*”.

The study carried out by Shelley-Robinson (2001) revealed that geographical location of a student could also have an adverse effect on his or her reading habit and stressed further that this challenge might be ascribed to Jamaica being a developing nation which had inadequate resources to acquire books. Akinson (2006) study identified some factors that militating students reading habits as community anticipations, family pressure, early literacy experiences, peer group pressures, stereotyping, classroom environments, parents anticipations, some behavioral matters and the availability of literacy materials that are provided by schools. “*Poor reading skill can make a child develop a poor attitude to school and it can create self-esteem problems later in life*” (Fosudo, 2010).

The association with peers group through exchange and sharing of story books was emerged to be essential ingredients that promote reading among peers and provide students with a chance to support one another through the reading practices which will develop their overall reading habits (Andrea & Nelson-Royes, 2012). Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levitt (2008) were of the view that library facilities, teacher support, and peer influence were reported to have an adverse effect on the reading habit of students.

3. Methodology

The researchers adopted a survey design for this study. The instrument for data collection was questionnaires. The entire population for the study comprises form J.H.S1, J.H.S2, and J.H.S3. The simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and forty-four (144) participants from the population of one hundred and fifty-six (156) students. Out of 144 questionnaires administered, one hundred and

thirty-eight (138) were retrieved and worth for the study, thus, representing 95.8% response rate.

3.1 Population of the Study

Table 1

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	72	52.2
Female	66	47.8
Total	138	100

Field Data, 2017

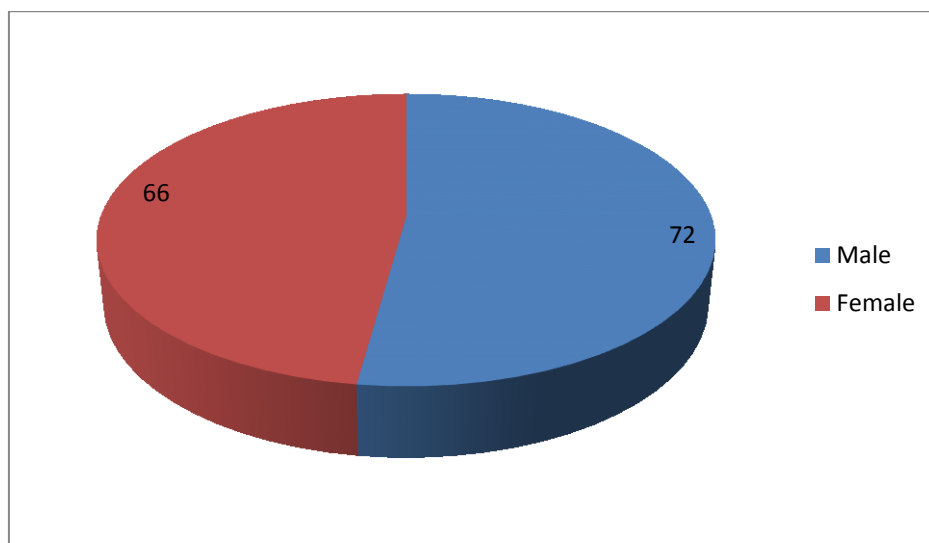


Figure 1

From the above, both table 1 and figure 1 show that 72 (52.2%) participants were males while 66 (47.8%) were females who participated in the study.

4. Finding and Discussions

4.1 Gender Attitudes towards Reading Habits

When the researchers sought to find out gender attitudes towards reading habits, table 2 below revealed that 30(41.7%) of the male participants had positive attitudes towards reading as compared to 33(50%) female participants while 20.8% of the male participants and 9.1% of their female participants remained neutral to the question. This implies that females had higher positive attitudes towards reading than their males counterparts. The present study agrees to the work of Gambell and Hunter (1999; Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez, & Kennedy, 2003; Meece, Glienke, & Burg (2006) which intimates that female normally exhibit positive attitudes towards reading, displaying more positive reading self-concept and involving themselves regularly in reading practices outside the school environment.

Table 2

Responses	Male Frequency	Percentage (%)	Female Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	30	41.7	33	50
Negative	27	37.5	27	40.9
Neutral	15	20.8	6	9.1
Total	72	100	66	100
Grand Total	138			

Field Survey, 2017

4.2 Frequency of Gender Engaging in Reading

The study also investigated how frequently gender engages in reading habits. The findings reported that 54(75%) male participants engage in reading habits always, followed by 13.9% who read rarely.

On the part of females, out of 66 participants, 46(69.7%) reported always, while 10.6% females indicated rarely. In general, male students were perceived to practice reading frequently somewhat better than their female counterparts as shown in table 3 below. The study is not in line with the study of Shen (2006) who did a study with 124 students on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at a University in Southern Taiwan. It was found that 83.9% of the students read online information often every day, followed by 31.4% who read newspapers and 33.1% read magazines often every day.

Table 3

Responses	Male Frequency	Percentage (%)	Female Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	54	75	46	69.7
Often	8	11.1	13	19.7
Rarely	10	13.9	7	10.6
Total	72	100	66	100
Grand Total	138			

Field Survey, 2017

4.3 Type of Materials Student Read

When the researchers sought to find out the type of materials the participants liked reading frequently, the findings reported that out of 72 male participants, 28(38.9%) liked reading textbooks frequently, followed by 26.4% who read novel/fiction and 19.4% read newspapers while song lyrics representing 5.6% and magazines representing 9.7% were the least materials that male students read. On the contrary, out of 66 female participants, 23(34.8%) read textbooks frequently, followed by 30(45.5%) who read novel/fictions frequently while 9.1% read newspapers, 6.1%, and 4.5% read songs lyrics and magazines respectively. The deduction was that most of the female participants read novel/fictions more frequently than their male counterparts as depicted in table 4

below. The study agrees to that of Williams (2008; Davila & Patrick;2010) which disclosed that females had a preference for reading fiction books as well as romantic stories, emotion, pets, horses, plays and animal stories.

Table 4

Responses	Male Frequency	Percentage (%)	Female Frequency	Percentage (%)
Textbooks	28	38.9	23	34.8
Novel/fictions	19	26.4	30	45.5
Newspapers	14	19.4	6	9.1
Song lyrics	4	5.6	4	6.1
Magazines	7	9.7	3	4.5
Total	72	100	66	100
Grand Total	138			

Field Survey, 2017

4.5 Factors Militating Against Reading Habits

Table 5

Factors	Male Frequency	Percentage (%)	Female Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of library facilities	41	56.9	38	57.6
Sporting Activities	9	12.5	5	7.6
House Chores	11	15.3	13	19.7
Long extra classes	8	11.1	6	9.1
Laziness	3	4.2	4	6
Total	72	100	66	100
Grand Total	138			

Field Survey, 2017

The participants were asked to indicate factors that militate against their reading habits. Interestingly, findings from table 5 above disclosed that both male and female participants were of the view that the lack of library facilities prevents them from reading. The analysis followed as 41(56.9%) male participants, 38(57.6%) female participants, house chores, male 15.3% and female 19.7% respectively. This study buttresses the work of Shah and Saleem (2010) that the lack of well-stocked library, the lack of serene reading environment, low literacy rate, the lack of reading orientation, poor education system and inadequate motivational package for library staff militate against their reading habits.

5. Conclusion

The study was set up to investigate gender variations in reading habits among students of Moland with a particular focus on Asantekwaa S.D.A Junior High School students. The findings of the study revealed that both male and female students have positive attitudes towards reading habits though there is a slight variation in reading habit among male and female students. In contrast, male students engage in reading more frequently than their female counterparts. The study also reports that the majority of male students like reading textbooks while in contrast, female students like reading novel/fictions. Interestingly, the findings report that both male and female students indicate that the lack of library facility in the school prevents them from acquiring reading habits.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the recommendations below were made to improve students reading habits. In order to ensure that students improve upon their reading habits, the school should introduce reading programmes such as reading week, reading competition, storytelling hours and spelling-bee competition. Teachers should draw programmes that will attract and encourage students to engage in effective reading habits. Parents should not engage students in excessive house chores but rather encourage them to involve in active reading practice. Parents should provide students with suitable and interesting reading materials that will engage students in reading and also prevent them from spending too many hours on television viewing.

Finally, the role of school library cannot be overlooked. The school management and parents association should harness resources to set up a library in the school since a library is part of a school system which serves as a store house of knowledge. It is also recommended that the newly library to be established should be well-stocked with appropriate varieties of books that will serve the reading needs of the students at all levels and such books should be made available to all students.

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