

**STUDENTS READING CULTURE AND READING COMPREHENSION  
PERFORMANCE IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN EGOR LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE**

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY**

**NOVEMBER 2025**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF THE DEGREE  
OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (EDUCATION) IN ENGLISH AND  
LITERATURE**

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## CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that the project work was carried out by Oluwakemi Isoken IGELEKE with Matriculation Number EDU2102222 in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City. It is adequate in scope and quality for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of B.A(Ed) in English and Literature.

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to God Almighty, the author and finisher of my faith, my parents Mr. and Mrs. Igeleke who painstakingly laid the foundation for my education and giving it all it takes.

## AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher's appreciation goes to Almighty God for His mercy and protection throughout this journey. She is immensely grateful to her project supervisor, Dr. A.E. Osawaru, for his guidance and valuable insights throughout the research process. His commitment, dedication, and assiduous effort in shaping the direction of this study have been immeasurable.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of students' reading culture on their reading comprehension performance in junior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The research was motivated by concerns that declining interest in reading, limited access to reading materials, and poor study habits may be contributing to low comprehension outcomes among junior secondary school students.

A descriptive survey design was adopted, and a sample of 70 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique from public junior secondary schools in the study area. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire on reading culture and a standardized reading comprehension test. Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, were employed for data analysis.

Findings revealed that students' reading habits, availability of reading materials, and parental encouragement had significant positive effects on reading comprehension performance. Conversely, excessive engagement with digital entertainment, such as social media and gaming, negatively influenced comprehension levels. Gender and age were not significant predictors of reading performance. The regression model showed that reading-culture-related factors jointly accounted for 58.7% of the variance in students' reading comprehension performance. The study concludes that a strong reading culture significantly enhances students' comprehension abilities. It recommends that teachers, parents, and school authorities collaborate to promote regular reading, equip school libraries, and implement reading-enhancement programs to improve students' academic outcomes in Egor Local Government Area.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Study**

Reading plays a pivotal role in the academic, social, and intellectual development of students. It is not just a basic skill but a gateway to all other forms of learning, particularly in a formal education system where written texts dominate instructional materials and assessment procedures. For junior secondary school students, <sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>ISEP</sub>www developing a strong reading culture is vital, as it fosters comprehension abilities that are critical for learning in all subject areas. Reading comprehension—defined as the ability to decode, understand, analyze, and interpret written text—is the backbone of academic success. However, for comprehension to be effective, students must engage regularly and voluntarily with texts, cultivating a habit of reading that goes beyond the classroom requirements (Akande, 2018).

In recent years, the reading culture among secondary school students in Nigeria has been on the decline. Studies have shown that many students do not read for pleasure or personal development; instead, reading is largely exam-oriented and perfunctory (Otache, 2020). This decline is particularly noticeable in urban and semi-urban settings like Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, where

environmental distractions, inadequate reading infrastructure, and poor parental involvement have all been cited as key factors affecting students' attitudes towards reading (Akorede, 2002). Moreover, the widespread dependence on rote learning methods in Nigerian schools has diminished students' capacity for critical thinking, independent learning, and comprehension (Ofuani, 2014).

The availability and accessibility of reading materials also play an important role in shaping students' reading habits. Unfortunately, many public schools in Nigeria lack well-resourced libraries and, where libraries do exist, they are often poorly maintained or underutilized (Chiegonu, 2020). Without sufficient access to stimulating and diverse reading materials, students have little opportunity to engage in sustained reading practices. This ultimately hinders the development of key literacy skills necessary for academic success (Ofuani, 2013). Reading comprehension, being a cognitive and linguistic process, demands the integration of various mental strategies, yet most students are not taught how to read strategically or how to approach texts critically (Amin, 2011).

Another dimension of the issue lies in the teaching methodologies employed by English Language teachers. Research has shown that comprehension instruction in many Nigerian classrooms remains largely teacher-centered, giving little room for

interactive reading, collaborative learning, or the development of metacognitive strategies (Osa-omoregie, 2017). As a result, students often rely on memorization of texts rather than understanding them. This pattern contributes to poor performance in comprehension tasks across various levels of education (Anyanegbu, 2016).

Furthermore, socio-cultural and gender-related factors have also been identified as influencing students' reading behaviors and performance. Several studies indicate that girls tend to outperform boys in reading-related tasks, possibly due to stronger motivational beliefs, home literacy practices, and social expectations that support verbal engagement (Junaid, 2015). Gender stereotypes, school environment, and parental expectations all play roles in shaping reading outcomes, with some scholars noting that societal narratives can either support or hinder reading development among adolescents (Casey, 2011). Others suggest that national and cultural representations of gender in educational systems impact students' academic self-perception and confidence in language-related tasks (Miller, 2015).

Beyond individual and familial factors, the broader learning environment—including the physical and pedagogical infrastructure—has a significant influence on students' engagement with reading. Schools with enriched learning environments that encourage voluntary reading and critical discussions tend

to produce students with higher comprehension skills (Chiu, 2018). In contrast, schools with rigid curricula, inadequate resources, and untrained teachers often reinforce passive learning, making students disengaged and disinterested in reading (Chiu, 2012).

The leisure reading habits of adolescents, particularly in urban settings, have also shifted dramatically in the face of growing digital distractions. The appeal of social media, video games, and streaming platforms has replaced traditional leisure reading for many students, thus limiting the time and interest they invest in reading books, newspapers, or academic materials (Huges-Hasell, 2007). This decline in leisure reading directly correlates with weaker comprehension skills, as students lack consistent engagement with written texts (Abdalhamid, 2012).

Altogether, the interplay of instructional inadequacies, lack of reading resources, home environment, and broader socio-cultural factors contributes to the low reading comprehension performance observed among junior secondary school students in areas like Egor Local government area. Addressing these issues requires a deep understanding of the existing reading culture among students and how it influences their ability to comprehend written texts. Only by identifying these underlying factors can stakeholders develop effective interventions to strengthen literacy outcomes in the

region (Bidabadi, 2011).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the central role of reading comprehension in academic success, there is growing concern that junior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State struggle significantly with understanding and interpreting written texts. Teachers frequently report that many students have difficulty identifying main ideas, drawing inferences, and answering comprehension questions with precision and clarity. These challenges persist even though reading comprehension is an integral part of the English Language curriculum and a core requirement for academic progression (Ofuani, 2013).

One major cause of this persistent challenge is the students' poor reading culture. Many junior secondary school students only engage in reading when it is tied to examinations or classroom activities. Reading for pleasure, personal growth, or curiosity is uncommon. This lack of intrinsic motivation for reading stunts vocabulary development, limits exposure to varied writing styles, and weakens cognitive engagement with texts (Otache, 2020). The school environment, too, does little to encourage a vibrant reading culture. Most public schools in Egor LGA do not have libraries, and those that do often lack current, appealing, and age-appropriate reading

materials (Chiegonu, 2020).

Compounding this is the fact that many teachers rely on traditional methods of instruction that emphasize rote memorization over analytical and interactive reading strategies. Students are rarely taught how to navigate texts using strategies like prediction, summarization, questioning, or visualization—skills essential for comprehension (Osa-omoregie, 2017). Without these tools, students are unable to approach reading assignments with the level of engagement and understanding required for academic success (Ofuani, 2014).

Another issue is the absence of a supportive reading environment at home. In many families, especially in low-income households, parents may not be literate themselves or may not recognize the value of encouraging reading habits in their children. Television, mobile phones, and other forms of media have taken precedence over reading as leisure activities, further reducing students' exposure to printed texts (Akorede, 2002). Where parents do not model reading or provide reading materials, students are unlikely to develop sustained reading habits (Akande, 2018).

Gender disparities also complicate the problem. Studies suggest that girls are often more inclined toward reading than boys, possibly due to societal encouragement of verbal and emotional expression among females (Junaid, 2015). Boys, on the other

hand, may perceive reading as less engaging or “unmasculine,” which can hinder their performance in comprehension tasks (Kleinfeld, 2006). This contributes to observable differences in reading performance across gender lines in many classrooms (Chiu, 2018).

Furthermore, while reading comprehension should ideally be reinforced across subjects, in practice it is confined largely to English Language instruction. This siloed approach means students miss out on opportunities to apply reading strategies in science, social studies, and literature, further limiting their development as competent readers (Amin, 2011). The consequences are far-reaching: students who fail to develop strong reading comprehension skills in junior secondary school are more likely to struggle in senior secondary school and beyond, impacting their performance in national examinations and their overall academic and career trajectories (Anyanegbu, 2016).

Given these multifaceted challenges, there is an urgent need to examine the relationship between students' reading culture and their reading comprehension performance. Identifying the specific factors that influence reading habits, and how these habits impact comprehension, is critical to designing effective strategies for improving literacy outcomes among junior secondary school students in Egor Local

Government Area (Abdalhamid, 2012).

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the reading culture of junior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State?
2. Is there any difference in the reading culture of junior secondary students based on gender?.
3. Is there any difference in the reading culture of junior secondary school students based on subject area?
4. Is there any difference in the reading culture of junior secondary school students based on parental involvement s?
5. What is the performance of students in reading comprehension in junior secondary school students in Egor Local government area of Edo state?
6. Is there any relationship between students reading culture and their performance in reading comprehension?

## **Purpose of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between students' reading culture and their reading comprehension performance in junior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. To achieve the stated aim, the following specific objectives will guide the study:

1. To assess the reading culture (i.e., frequency, habits, and attitudes towards reading) among junior secondary school students in Egor LGA.
2. To examine the level of reading comprehension performance among junior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area.
3. To determine the influence of students' reading culture on their reading comprehension performance.

## **Significance of the Study**

Provides empirical data on students' reading habits: The study will generate relevant and current data on the nature and extent of reading culture among junior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, which is currently under-researched.

Highlights the relationship between reading culture and comprehension performance: It will establish the extent to which students' reading habits impact their

performance in reading comprehension tasks.

**Informs teaching strategies in English Language classrooms:** The findings will guide English teachers in selecting and adopting more effective instructional methods that promote active reading and deeper comprehension among students.

**Promotes learner-centered reading practices:** By understanding how reading culture influences comprehension, the study can encourage the adoption of student-centered approaches that make reading more engaging and meaningful.

**Stimulates policy intervention:** The study may influence educational policy makers to implement reading-friendly policies, such as mandating structured reading periods in school timetables and investing in reading programs.

**Advocates for improved library facilities:** It will underscore the need for functional and well-equipped libraries in public schools, helping education authorities prioritize library development and maintenance.

**Supports the design of reading intervention programs:** NGOs, government agencies, and literacy advocates can use the findings to design community-based and school-based programs that encourage voluntary reading among students.

**Benefits parents and guardians:** The study will enlighten parents on the crucial role they play in cultivating reading habits at home and monitoring their children's literacy

development.

Assists school administrators: Principals and education supervisors may use the findings to create literacy-rich environments, implement book clubs, and monitor students' reading engagement levels.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study is limited to junior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. It focuses specifically on the relationship between reading culture and reading comprehension performance. While the study acknowledges other factors that may influence comprehension such as teaching methods, cognitive ability, or socio-economic background, its primary focus remains on students' personal reading habits and cultural attitudes toward reading.

The study will be conducted using a sample drawn from selected public and private junior secondary schools in the Local Government Area. The findings may not be generalizable to all students across Nigeria but will provide a useful snapshot of the situation within the context of Egor Local Government Area

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms will be encountered during the course of this study. It shall be operationally defined as it is used.

***Reading Culture:*** The consistent practice and positive attitude towards reading for pleasure or academic purposes. It includes frequency of reading, types of materials read, and personal motivation to read.

***Reading Comprehension:*** The ability to understand, interpret, and derive meaning from a written text. It involves skills such as summarization, inference, vocabulary recognition, and answering comprehension questions.

***Junior Secondary School:*** The educational stage in Nigeria that comprises students typically between ages 11 to 14, usually in JSS1 to JSS3 levels.

***Performance:*** The measurable outcome or results students obtain in reading comprehension assessments or tasks.

***Egor Local Government Area:*** One of the 18 local government areas in Edo State, Nigeria, with both urban and semi-urban settlements, serving as the geographical focus of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews and synthesizes relevant literature on the concepts of reading culture and reading comprehension performance, particularly among junior secondary school students. The review is structured under conceptual clarification, theoretical framework, empirical studies (local and international), and the identification of research gaps using the outline below:

- The Concept of Reading
- The Concept of Reading Culture
- The Concept of Reading Comprehension
- Theoretical Framework of Reading and Literacy Development
- Reading Culture among Students
- Reading Culture and Gender
- Reading Culture and Subject Area
- Reading Culture and Parent Environment
- Relationship between Reading Outline and Reading Comprehension
- Teacher's Role in Promoting Reading Culture
- Influence of Technology and Digital Media on Reading Culture
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

## **The Concept of Reading**

Reading is one of the most fundamental skills required for academic success and lifelong learning. It is a process through which meaning is derived from written text, allowing for the comprehension, interpretation, and critical evaluation of information. Reading encompasses both the mechanical act of decoding letters and words and the higher-order cognitive functions that involve understanding and synthesizing information. Bartlett (1932) emphasized that reading goes beyond the passive recognition of symbols; it is an active process that involves memory, cognition, and social interaction. In educational settings, reading serves as the backbone of learning, as most of the instructional material is presented in written form. This underscores the necessity of developing strong reading skills from an early age. Elley (1992) posited that literacy, particularly reading literacy, forms the foundation of educational achievement and personal development. In the classroom, students who can read effectively are more likely to succeed academically because they are better equipped to grasp content across disciplines. Conversely, students with poor reading skills often struggle to keep up with curriculum requirements.

Reading is not a monolithic skill; it includes several components such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These components

interact dynamically as readers decode and make sense of texts. For instance, a student may be able to pronounce words fluently yet fail to comprehend the passage if the vocabulary is unfamiliar or the context is not well understood. This illustrates the multidimensional nature of reading. In addition to academic implications, reading has significant social and psychological benefits. It fosters empathy, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. When students read widely, they are exposed to different perspectives, cultures, and ideologies, which broadens their worldview. Furthermore, reading serves as a tool for self-expression and identity formation, particularly during adolescence, a critical period for cognitive and emotional development.

Despite its importance, reading is often undervalued in many educational systems, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. There is a growing concern that the reading culture among students is deteriorating. According to Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007), students today, particularly in urban settings, are less likely to engage in leisure reading due to the distractions posed by electronic media and a general lack of interest. This has significant implications for educational outcomes and national development. Several factors affect the development of reading skills. These include individual motivation, parental involvement, teacher quality, and the availability of reading materials. For example, Abdalhamid (2012) found that students

who received encouragement from their parents and teachers were more likely to develop strong reading habits. In contrast, those who lacked this support often showed poor engagement with reading tasks. Moreover, the presence or absence of school libraries can significantly influence students' access to books and their overall reading experience.

In the Nigerian context, the issue of reading is further compounded by systemic problems such as inadequate funding for education, poorly stocked libraries, and overcrowded classrooms. These factors create an environment that is not conducive to reading and learning. Akorede (2002) highlighted the critical role of environmental factors in shaping reading habits, noting that students in resource-rich settings were more likely to develop positive attitudes toward reading compared to those in resource-poor environments. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering reading among students. Through effective pedagogy, teachers can inspire a love for reading and help students overcome barriers such as low self-confidence and lack of interest. Amin, Aly, and Amin (2011) emphasized the importance of strategic instruction in reading, noting that students who were taught how to approach texts methodically showed greater improvement in reading comprehension. This highlights the need for teacher training programs to focus on innovative strategies that make reading both accessible and

enjoyable for learners.

Reading is an essential skill that underpins academic success and personal development. Despite its significance, it is often neglected due to various individual and systemic challenges. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, parents, and the community at large. Ensuring that students develop strong reading skills is not merely an educational imperative; it is a societal responsibility.

## **The Concept of Reading Culture**

### ***Definition and Nature of Reading Culture***

Reading culture refers to the habitual and voluntary engagement with written texts for various purposes including academic success, information acquisition, and recreation. It involves not only the frequency of reading but also the attitudes, motivations, and preferences associated with the activity (Akande & Oyedapo, 2018). A strong reading culture develops when individuals internalize the value of reading and incorporate it into their daily routines. In societies where reading is prioritized, students tend to achieve higher literacy levels, better comprehension, and improved cognitive development.

## **Characteristics of a Strong Reading Culture**

A robust reading culture is characterized by the following:

- Availability of and access to reading materials
- Regular voluntary reading beyond school requirements
- Parental and teacher encouragement of reading
- Institutional support through libraries and reading programs

According to Chiegonu and Idoko (2020), school libraries play a pivotal role in nurturing this culture by providing students with diverse materials that stimulate reading interest.

## **Reading Culture in the Nigerian Context**

In Nigeria, concerns about the declining reading culture have been raised by numerous researchers. Otache (2020) posits that this trend stems from several interrelated factors including digital distractions, socio-economic limitations, and infrastructural decay. Unlike in Western societies where children are socialized into reading from an early age, many Nigerian students are introduced to reading only in the school context, often in a rigid and examination-focused manner.

## **2. The Concept of Reading Comprehension**

### **Definition and Components**

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from text through a combination of decoding, vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and inferencing. According to Amin, Aly, and Amin (2011), comprehension is not a passive process but an active interaction between the reader and the text. The reader must bring linguistic, cognitive, and experiential resources to bear to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate written information.

Key components of reading comprehension include:

- Literal comprehension: understanding the explicit meaning of the text
- Inferential comprehension: deducing implied meanings and relationships
- Critical comprehension: evaluating content for logic, credibility, and relevance
- Creative comprehension: applying the text's information to new contexts

### **Cognitive Processes in Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is deeply cognitive. Chiu, McBride-Chang, and Lin (2012) explain that it requires the integration of working memory, attention, and metacognitive strategies. Students must monitor their understanding, identify confusing parts, and apply corrective strategies such as re-reading or using contextual clues. Inadequate development of these processes can lead to surface-level reading and poor academic performance.

## **Theoretical Framework of Reading and Literacy Development**

The development of reading and literacy is rooted in a wide range of theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain how individuals acquire the skills necessary to decode, comprehend, and critically engage with texts. Understanding these frameworks is essential in order to situate contemporary studies within broader intellectual traditions while also providing a foundation for analyzing the relationship between reading culture, comprehension, and learning outcomes. Among the most prominent theories influencing literacy research are Piaget's cognitive development theory, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, the Schema theory, the Simple View of Reading, and Emergent Literacy theory. These frameworks provide complementary perspectives, offering insights into both the cognitive and environmental processes that shape literacy development.

Piaget's cognitive development theory underscores the role of mental maturation in literacy learning. According to Piaget, children move through distinct stages of cognitive development sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational each of which influences their ability to acquire and process information (Piaget, 1970). Within this framework, reading development is viewed as an outcome of increasing cognitive maturity, where children progress from basic symbol

recognition to more complex reasoning and comprehension. For instance, younger children in the preoperational stage may recognize letters and simple words but struggle with inferential comprehension, whereas those in the concrete operational stage are better able to integrate logical structures and understand narrative coherence. This perspective highlights the importance of aligning reading instruction with developmental readiness, ensuring that tasks and texts are appropriate to the learner's stage of cognitive growth.

In contrast, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural mediation in literacy development. Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning occurs within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where children can achieve higher levels of understanding with the guidance of more knowledgeable others, such as teachers, parents, or peers. From this viewpoint, reading and literacy are not purely individual cognitive achievements but are embedded within cultural practices, linguistic exchanges, and shared experiences. Vygotsky's theory suggests that dialogic reading, scaffolding, and peer collaboration can significantly enhance comprehension and critical literacy. Importantly, this perspective links directly to the role of parental environment and reading culture, as children exposed to supportive literacy practices at home—such

as storytelling, shared reading, and access to books—are better positioned to develop strong literacy skills.

Building upon these socio-cognitive perspectives, Schema theory provides another influential framework for understanding reading comprehension. Anderson and Pearson (1984) define schema as organized knowledge structures that individuals use to interpret and integrate new information. In reading, comprehension depends on the activation of prior knowledge or schemas, which allow readers to make predictions, draw inferences, and connect text to existing mental models. For example, a child reading a passage about a school trip is likely to better comprehend the text if they have prior experiences or cultural knowledge related to excursions, school activities, or community events. Schema theory therefore underscores the importance of background knowledge in reading comprehension and suggests that differences in literacy outcomes may reflect disparities in exposure to diverse experiences, cultural capital, and parental involvement.

The Simple View of Reading (SVR), proposed by Gough and Tunmer (1986), offers a more specific model of literacy by positing that reading comprehension is the product of two core components: decoding and linguistic comprehension. Decoding refers to the ability to translate written symbols into spoken words, while linguistic

comprehension involves making sense of the meaning conveyed by these words. According to the SVR, reading comprehension (RC) can be represented as  $RC = \text{Decoding} \times \text{Linguistic Comprehension}$ . This equation underscores that strong comprehension requires both proficient word recognition and adequate language understanding. For instance, a child may have strong decoding skills but still struggle with comprehension if they lack sufficient vocabulary or background knowledge. This model has been widely applied in educational practice and assessment, providing a useful framework for evaluating students' strengths and weaknesses in literacy development (Hoover & Gough, 1990).

Emergent Literacy theory extends the understanding of reading development by emphasizing that literacy learning begins long before formal schooling. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) argue that emergent literacy encompasses the early skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to reading and writing that children develop through interactions with print, language, and literacy-rich environments. These include print awareness, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, and narrative skills. Importantly, emergent literacy theory highlights the role of family and community in fostering early literacy behaviors. Children exposed to storybooks, songs, rhymes, and parental reading at home develop pre-literacy skills

that lay the foundation for later academic success. This theory aligns with empirical findings showing that children from print-rich environments tend to demonstrate stronger reading comprehension and school readiness compared to peers with limited literacy exposure (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

Another significant framework in literacy studies is the Transactional Theory of Reading developed by Rosenblatt (1978). This theory emphasizes the dynamic relationship between reader and text, arguing that meaning is not fixed within the text but is co-constructed through the reader's engagement, experiences, and interpretations. Rosenblatt distinguishes between efferent reading, which focuses on extracting information, and aesthetic reading, which emphasizes the reader's personal and emotional response to the text. This framework is particularly relevant in discussions of reading culture, as it highlights how individual preferences, motivations, and cultural identities shape reading practices and comprehension. By recognizing the reader as an active participant in meaning-making, the transactional perspective underscores the importance of fostering not only decoding skills but also critical and reflective reading habits.

Furthermore, ecological models of literacy development provide a holistic perspective by integrating cognitive, social, and environmental factors.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), although originally developed to explain human development broadly, has been applied to literacy research to highlight how literacy outcomes are influenced by multiple, interacting environments family, school, community, and broader cultural contexts. For example, a child's reading culture may be shaped by parental literacy practices, school curriculum, peer influences, and societal attitudes toward reading. This ecological approach underscores that interventions aimed at improving reading culture and comprehension must address multiple layers of influence, including access to resources, teacher training, family involvement, and community engagement.

Taken together, these theoretical frameworks reveal that reading and literacy development cannot be explained by a single factor but are the result of complex interactions between cognitive, linguistic, social, and cultural processes. Piaget's developmental model emphasizes cognitive readiness, while Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory highlights the role of interaction and scaffolding. Schema theory explains the importance of prior knowledge, whereas the Simple View of Reading delineates the dual components of decoding and comprehension. Emergent Literacy theory underscores the significance of early exposure, Rosenblatt's

transactional theory highlights the active role of readers in meaning-making, and ecological models integrate the multiple systems influencing literacy.

These frameworks collectively provide a robust foundation for analyzing the factors influencing reading culture and comprehension among students. They suggest that literacy development is not merely a matter of individual skill acquisition but is embedded in broader developmental, social, and cultural contexts. In practical terms, this means that effective literacy interventions should be multifaceted addressing cognitive skills such as decoding, fostering rich linguistic and cultural experiences, engaging families in literacy practices, and creating supportive school and community environments. By grounding the study in these theories, researchers and educators are better equipped to design strategies that enhance reading culture, promote comprehension, and ultimately improve academic outcomes for learners.

### **Reading Culture among Students**

Reading culture among students refers to the habitual and sustained engagement with reading materials for academic, informational, or recreational purposes. This concept is vital because it plays a significant role in students' overall educational attainment, language development, and lifelong learning habits. Despite global awareness of the benefits of reading, there is growing concern about the declining

interest in reading among students, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. According to Otache (2020), the reading culture among Nigerian students is deteriorating due to the allure of digital distractions, inadequate school infrastructure, and a general societal apathy toward reading. One of the core reasons for the weak reading culture among students is the lack of motivation and exposure to pleasurable reading materials. Many students are only exposed to textbooks and academic journals, which are often seen as boring or difficult to understand. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) emphasize the importance of leisure reading, arguing that it fosters intrinsic motivation to read. When students are encouraged to read for fun, they are more likely to become lifelong readers who read not just to pass exams but to satisfy their curiosity and broaden their perspectives.

Environmental factors also contribute significantly to students' reading habits. According to Akorede (2002), students who are raised in book-rich environments tend to develop stronger reading habits than those who are not. Unfortunately, many Nigerian schools lack functional libraries, and even where libraries exist, they are poorly stocked and underutilized. This deficiency limits students' access to diverse reading materials that could otherwise stimulate their interest. Peer influence is another critical factor. Students who belong to peer groups that value reading are more

likely to develop positive reading habits. Reading clubs, peer reading sessions, and group discussions about books can help make reading a social and enjoyable activity. Chiegonu and Idoko (2020) suggest that integrating these social dimensions into school programs can be a strategic way to improve students' reading culture.

Parental and teacher involvement are equally important. Parents who read regularly and discuss books with their children set a strong example and instill reading habits early. Teachers who assign engaging reading materials, encourage open discussions about readings, and use interactive teaching methods can further enhance students' attitudes toward reading. As noted by Abdalhamid (2012), students perform better in literacy tasks when both their home and school environments support and value reading. Moreover, curriculum design plays a role in either promoting or impeding reading culture. When school curricula prioritize rote learning and examination success over critical thinking and comprehension, students may see reading as a means to an end rather than a fulfilling activity in itself. Ofuani (2013) found that teaching strategies that encourage independent reading and critical engagement with texts yield better academic outcomes and more positive attitudes toward reading. Reading culture among students is shaped by a constellation of factors, including environmental conditions, social influence, pedagogical practices, and

curriculum structure. To improve this culture, stakeholders in the education sector must adopt a multifaceted approach that includes making reading materials accessible, involving parents and teachers, and encouraging leisure reading alongside academic study.

### **Reading Culture and Gender**

The issue of gender differences in reading culture and achievement has been extensively studied, with consistent findings indicating that female students tend to outperform their male counterparts in reading and literacy tasks. According to Chiu (2018), girls generally display higher motivation and interest in reading, which translates to better performance in reading comprehension and literacy assessments. This gender disparity is evident across different cultural contexts and educational systems. One explanation for this trend is the difference in socialization patterns between boys and girls. Girls are often encouraged to engage in language-rich activities such as storytelling and diary writing from a young age, while boys are more frequently directed toward physical and action-oriented play. This early exposure to verbal and written language activities gives girls a head start in developing reading skills. Miller, Eagly, and Linn (2015) argue that societal expectations and gender stereotypes play a crucial role in shaping children's academic interests and

competencies.

In the Nigerian context, similar patterns are observed. Studies by Balogun (1997) and Alutu and Eraikhuemen (2004) show that female students generally show more positive attitudes toward reading than male students. This may be partly because girls in Nigerian schools are more compliant with school norms and are less likely to be distracted by external social pressures that discourage academic engagement. However, this does not mean that boys are inherently less capable of reading well. Rather, it suggests that current educational systems and societal norms may not adequately support the reading development of boys. Kleinfeld (2006) recommends strategies such as providing male-oriented reading materials (e.g., books about sports, adventure, and science fiction) and using male role models who value reading to help boys see reading as a masculine as well as intellectual activity.

It is also important to note that boys may prefer different types of texts and may not always respond well to traditional literacy instruction methods. Junaid (2015) found that when boys are given opportunities to choose what they read and are allowed to discuss readings in informal settings, their engagement with reading improves significantly. Therefore, gender-sensitive approaches to teaching reading are essential for building an inclusive reading culture.

Moreover, educators must recognize and address the implicit biases that may affect how reading is taught and assessed. Boys who struggle with reading should be given targeted support without being stigmatized. Differentiated instruction and personalized reading plans can help ensure that both boys and girls receive the support they need to develop strong reading habits. In conclusion, gender plays a significant role in shaping reading culture, with girls generally exhibiting stronger reading habits and performance. However, with the right strategies, boys can also become enthusiastic and competent readers. Educators, parents, and policymakers must work together to create a balanced and supportive environment that promotes reading across all genders.

### **Reading Culture and Subject Area**

Reading culture is not only influenced by gender and environment but also by the specific subject areas students are engaged in. Different academic disciplines place varying demands on students' reading habits and comprehension strategies. For example, subjects like Literature, History, and Social Studies inherently require extensive reading, while subjects like Mathematics and Physical Education may emphasize problem-solving or practical engagement over reading. Students in arts and humanities are often more exposed to narrative texts, expository essays, and critical

readings. As a result, they may develop a more robust reading culture because reading is central to their academic success. Conversely, students in science and technical fields may engage less with narrative texts and more with diagrams, charts, and formulas, which could limit their exposure to complex reading tasks. According to Ofuani (2014), reading comprehension is often taken for granted in science subjects, which leads to difficulties in understanding technical texts and exam questions.

However, this disciplinary divide does not mean that reading is less important in technical subjects. On the contrary, scientific literacy requires the ability to comprehend complex texts, interpret data, and follow procedural instructions. Students who struggle with reading may find it difficult to succeed even in math and science courses, especially as they progress to higher levels of education. Chiu, McBride-Chang, and Lin (2012) highlight the cognitive challenges students face when reading discipline-specific texts, which often contain specialized vocabulary and abstract concepts. Furthermore, subject area teachers may have differing expectations about students' reading abilities. For instance, Literature teachers may provide more structured reading assignments and emphasize interpretative skills, while science teachers may focus on factual accuracy and problem-solving. This divergence can create inconsistencies in how students approach reading across subjects. Amin, Aly,

and Amin (2011) recommend that all teachers, regardless of discipline, receive training in reading instruction strategies to support literacy development across the curriculum.

Another critical factor is the relevance and availability of subject-specific reading materials. In Nigeria, many schools lack textbooks and supplementary reading materials that are aligned with national curricula and appropriate for students' reading levels. As Akande and Oyedapo (2018) observed, when students are not provided with engaging and relevant reading materials, their interest in reading declines regardless of the subject area. Encouraging cross-disciplinary reading can also enhance students' reading culture. For instance, integrating literary excerpts into science or social science lessons can help students appreciate the role of language and narrative in all forms of knowledge. This approach not only improves literacy but also fosters critical thinking and interdisciplinary learning. Reading culture is closely tied to subject areas, with students in certain disciplines having more opportunities to develop strong reading habits. However, reading is essential across all subjects, and efforts must be made to promote literacy as a foundational skill in every academic field. By adopting a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to reading instruction, educators can help all students, regardless of their academic interests, become proficient and enthusiastic

readers.

### **Reading Culture and Parent Environment**

The home environment is widely recognized as a crucial determinant of children's academic success and, by extension, their reading culture. A child's reading habits often stem from early interactions with parents and the overall environment in which literacy activities are modeled and encouraged. Parental involvement, access to reading materials, and the value placed on literacy at home all shape the reading culture that students develop. According to Neuman and Celano (2001), children from literacy-rich home environments where parents read frequently and encourage reading tend to display higher motivation toward reading and perform better in language-related tasks. In many African societies, including Nigeria, the home setting often lacks essential resources such as age-appropriate books, quiet reading spaces, and literacy stimulation tools. These deficiencies can significantly hinder the development of a positive reading culture. However, even in resource-constrained environments, parental attitudes toward reading can compensate to a certain extent. Children who observe parents engaging in reading—whether for information or leisure—are more likely to adopt similar behaviors. Akorede (2002) noted that children exposed to storytelling traditions, oral literature, and informal reading

practices at home demonstrated an early affinity for reading.

Moreover, parents who actively participate in their children's academic development—by reading to them, helping with homework, and discussing schoolwork—create a supportive learning environment that fosters reading engagement. This aligns with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which posits that learning is a socially mediated activity and that more knowledgeable others (such as parents) play a key role in scaffolding children's cognitive development, including literacy skills. On the contrary, homes characterized by low parental literacy levels, minimal reading engagement, and an overreliance on electronic devices tend to discourage reading among children. In urban and semi-urban areas, television, mobile phones, and video games have become dominant leisure activities, often at the expense of reading. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) argue that without conscious efforts by parents to balance technology use with reading, children may develop apathy toward books.

Furthermore, socioeconomic status influences the parent environment's contribution to reading culture. Higher-income families are more likely to afford books, subscribe to educational platforms, and enroll their children in reading enrichment programs. In contrast, lower-income households may struggle to meet

basic needs, leaving little room for investment in literacy materials or activities. To improve reading culture among students, parental engagement must be prioritized through community outreach, public literacy campaigns, and school-parent collaboration. Schools should consider hosting workshops that educate parents on simple but effective ways to support their children's reading at home, regardless of their own literacy levels. When parents serve as reading role models and create an environment that values literacy, students are more likely to internalize these values and develop strong reading habits.

### **Relationship between Reading Culture and Reading Comprehension**

There exists a strong and direct relationship between reading culture and reading comprehension. Reading culture refers to the habitual engagement with reading as a purposeful and enjoyable activity, while reading comprehension involves the ability to understand, interpret, and derive meaning from written texts. A well-established reading culture enhances students' exposure to diverse texts, thereby improving their vocabulary, background knowledge, and cognitive abilities necessary for deeper comprehension. When students read frequently, they build fluency, increase their familiarity with different sentence structures, and expand their mental lexicon—all of which contribute to better understanding of complex

texts. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) emphasized that students who read regularly develop intrinsic motivation, which in turn leads to improved comprehension skills. These students are not only able to decode texts effectively but are also better at making inferences, drawing conclusions, and synthesizing information across passages.

Moreover, a positive reading culture instills metacognitive strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, and clarifying. These strategies are essential components of reading comprehension. Students who are habitual readers are more likely to monitor their understanding and employ corrective strategies when faced with difficulties, compared to students who lack a strong reading foundation. In contrast, students with a weak reading culture often face significant challenges in comprehension tasks. Since they read infrequently, their exposure to varied vocabulary and text structures is limited, which hampers their ability to process and make sense of academic content. This is particularly problematic in content-heavy subjects such as literature, social studies, and science, where comprehension is essential for academic performance.

Reading culture also influences affective factors such as reading attitude and confidence, which are important for comprehension. Students who enjoy reading

are more likely to approach texts with a positive mindset, making them more receptive to the ideas presented in the material. Conversely, students who view reading as tedious or difficult may approach texts with anxiety or disinterest, leading to surface-level understanding or complete disengagement. In sum, the relationship between reading culture and comprehension is mutually reinforcing. A strong reading culture leads to better comprehension, and successful comprehension experiences, in turn, motivate students to read more. Therefore, strategies aimed at improving reading comprehension must also include deliberate efforts to cultivate a rich and engaging reading culture among students.

### **Teacher's Role in Promoting Reading Culture**

Teachers play an indispensable role in shaping and sustaining reading culture, particularly in contexts like Edo State, Nigeria, where challenges such as limited infrastructure, parental involvement, and access to resources can hinder students' engagement with reading. Beyond their function as transmitters of knowledge, teachers act as facilitators of literacy development and cultural mediators who nurture positive attitudes toward reading. In the Nigerian educational landscape, teachers are strategically positioned to influence reading practices, both within and outside the classroom, by modeling effective reading behavior, designing appropriate

instructional strategies, and fostering environments that promote lifelong literacy.

One of the key responsibilities of teachers in Edo State is the cultivation of positive reading attitudes through classroom practices. Students often mirror the enthusiasm and commitment of their teachers. Research has shown that when teachers exhibit a personal love for reading and regularly share their reading experiences with students, learners are more likely to perceive reading as enjoyable and valuable (Okebukola, 2021). For instance, teachers who read aloud to their students, engage them in discussions about texts, or introduce culturally relevant stories that reflect Edo traditions can enhance students' motivation to read. This modeling process not only improves comprehension skills but also builds emotional connections with texts.

Furthermore, teachers in Edo State must integrate reading across the curriculum to demonstrate its importance beyond the subject of English language. Reading is not only a linguistic skill but also a foundational tool for learning in mathematics, science, social studies, and other disciplines (Ogunleye, 2020). Teachers who encourage students to explore textbooks, supplementary materials, and online resources across various subjects help to embed reading as a cross-disciplinary habit. This holistic approach addresses the problem where students view reading only as a requirement for passing examinations rather than as a lifelong skill.

The teacher's role also extends to the selection and provision of age-appropriate and culturally relevant materials. In Edo State, where indigenous languages and cultural identity play important roles, teachers who incorporate local folktales, proverbs, and literature into the curriculum help to connect students' lived experiences with academic content (Eze, 2019). This cultural relevance not only sustains students' interest but also validates their heritage within the educational system. Teachers can also utilize bilingual materials, especially in primary schools, to strengthen literacy development by bridging students' home languages and English.

In addition, teachers serve as literacy coaches by teaching explicit reading strategies that aid comprehension. These include skimming, scanning, summarizing, predicting, and questioning techniques (Yusuf & Afolabi, 2021). In Edo State classrooms where students may struggle with dense texts due to inadequate prior exposure, teachers must intentionally scaffold learning by modeling how to break down texts, identify main ideas, and make inferences. By equipping learners with these tools, teachers help students navigate complex reading tasks and gradually build confidence in their reading abilities.

Another significant role of teachers is creating supportive reading

environments both within the school and in collaboration with communities. Classrooms that include mini-libraries, reading corners, or dedicated reading times signal to students that reading is a valued activity. However, many schools in Edo State face infrastructural challenges and lack well-stocked libraries (Igbinedion, 2022). Teachers, therefore, often innovate by pooling resources, encouraging book donations, or organizing reading clubs. In schools where resources are scarce, teachers can still encourage extensive reading by sharing available books among students, organizing peer reading activities, or utilizing digital reading materials when possible.

The teacher's role in assessment and feedback is also crucial in sustaining reading culture. Beyond testing for comprehension, teachers can provide formative feedback that emphasizes progress rather than punishment. Encouraging words and constructive corrections can help students, particularly reluctant readers, to see reading as an achievable skill rather than a source of failure (Adegbite, 2021). Teachers in Edo State must therefore balance their assessment practices to promote growth in reading proficiency while nurturing intrinsic motivation.

Importantly, teachers also act as mediators between home and school in promoting reading culture. Since parental involvement is often limited due to

socioeconomic factors, teachers in Edo State must bridge this gap by engaging parents in literacy promotion. This can be achieved through organizing reading workshops for parents, assigning reading-related homework that encourages joint reading at home, or sensitizing parents about the importance of providing a literacy-rich environment (Okebukola, 2021). By extending their influence to the family setting, teachers reinforce reading as a shared responsibility.

Professional development plays a central role in equipping teachers to fulfill these responsibilities effectively. Continuous training on modern literacy pedagogy, use of digital tools, and innovative reading strategies can empower teachers in Edo State to adapt to evolving educational demands. For instance, workshops on integrating technology into reading instruction or on inclusive strategies for struggling readers can enhance teacher capacity (Ogunleye, 2020). Without regular capacity-building, teachers may fall back on traditional rote methods that prioritize memorization over critical engagement with texts.

Moreover, teachers must play a leadership role in advocating for systemic improvements that support reading culture. In many schools across Edo State, insufficient funding for libraries, lack of instructional materials, and overcrowded classrooms pose significant barriers (Igbinedion, 2022). Teachers can collaborate

with administrators, policymakers, and non-governmental organizations to advocate for investment in reading infrastructure. By taking initiative, teachers extend their influence beyond the classroom to shape broader educational policies that impact literacy development.

The psychological and emotional support teachers provide is equally critical. Students who struggle with reading often face low self-esteem and may disengage from learning altogether. Teachers who show patience, encouragement, and empathy create safe spaces where students feel confident to practice reading without fear of ridicule (Adegbite, 2021). Such nurturing relationships are essential in Edo State, where some students may enter school with limited early literacy exposure. Teachers, through their support, can transform these students into avid readers over time.

### **Influence of Technology and Digital Media on Reading Culture**

In the contemporary digital era, technology and digital media have profoundly reshaped students' reading culture both by expanding access to texts and by introducing new distractions. On one hand, the internet and social media platforms provide unprecedented access to information and varied reading materials, potentially enriching literacy experiences. On the other hand, these same

technologies facilitate shallow reading habits, reduce sustained attention, and increasingly compete with traditional reading forms like books and newspapers.

Digital platforms social media, websites, messaging apps, video streaming are now pervasive in the daily lives of adolescents, offering quick updates rather than sustained engagement. The transition toward “shallow reading,” characterized by rapidly scrolling through short-form content and visual summaries, reflects a shift from depth to immediacy in reading habits (Schütte, 2021; Wikipedia, 2025). The Guardian Nigeria highlights how the dominance of social media platforms, with their short, fast-paced feeds, has conditioned youths to prefer fragmented content over extended reading, undermining attention and critical engagement (Dada, 2025)

Empirical research in Nigeria supports this trend. A study among secondary school students in Abuja found a rise in social media usage corresponded with a decline in reading habits many students became addicted to their devices and neglected reading for both academic and personal development (Allahde, Garba & Abu-Udenyi, 2025). Similarly, among accounting undergraduates in Anambra State, heavy social media use was significantly negatively correlated with both the frequency of reading and the time spent reading (Oranefo & Nwachukwu, 2023).

Studies involving polytechnic students in South–South Nigeria revealed that students often read only every few days and the greatest hindrance to reading was social media, with some spending up to seven hours daily engaged on platforms instead of reading (Anyira, 2023). Similar findings emerged from the study of high school students in Osun and Ibadan, where social media use was linked to diminished reading culture (Akande & Oyedapo, 2018).

However, not all outcomes are negative. Some digital environments offer valuable support for literacy. A study of HND mass-communication students in Kwara State found that, while leisure-oriented social media use detracted from reading, educational content and book recommendation platforms improved academic reading engagement (Ahmed, Ogalue & Abdulkarim, 2025). This suggests a nuanced influence—digital tools can both distract and support depending on how they’re formulated and used.

International evidence reinforces this complexity. In the U.S., daily leisure reading dropped from 28% in 2003 to just 16% in 2023, attributed partially to digital media culture and declining attention spans (University of Florida & University College London, 2025). In the UK, reading enjoyment among 8–18-year-olds is at a twenty-year low; teachers report that screen time often

displaces reading. Nevertheless, programs leveraging digital tools like BookTok, audiobooks, and interactive applications show potential to rekindle interest (Financial Times, 2025). Yet digital reading may not yield the same comprehension benefits as print. A review of 24 studies covering nearly half a million participants found that long-term print reading improves comprehension 6–8 times more than digital reading, especially among younger learners (University of Valencia researchers, via Reddit summary). While older students may adapt to digital reading over time, younger students are particularly at risk of reduced vocabulary retention and superficial understanding when submerged in screen-based reading.

Despite these concerns, digital media also provides innovative pathways to revive reading culture. An editorial from India notes that social media trends can make physical books “cool” again; online communities celebrating reading have spurred renewed interest in tangible books (Economic Times, 2025). Similarly, the *New Yorker* contends that AI and digital platforms are transforming reading into a remix culture where users interact dynamically with text summarizing, editing, and personalizing content creating new forms of literary engagement although potentially at the cost of deeper reading experiences (New Yorker, 2025).

A theoretical lens such as metaliteracy integrates these phenomena by

encouraging critical evaluation, production, and sharing of information online. Metaliteracy goes beyond traditional information literacy by encompassing digital, media, and visual literacies, and by promoting metacognitive reflection, particularly within participatory online contexts (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011). This approach aligns with contemporary literacy goals empowering students to navigate, critique, and create information in digital spaces rather than merely consume it.

Furthermore, transliteracy, which involves fluid movement across media integrating text, video, audio, and interactive content offers pathways for technology-enhanced reading culture. Transliteracy tools enable multimodal engagement with texts, such as connecting with authors through online platforms or using voice-thread conversations around stories, fostering deeper understanding and relevance (Marcus, 2012). Visual literacy also plays a vital role in supporting digital reading engagement. The ability to interpret and create meaning from images, infographics, and interactive media is increasingly critical in digital learning environments. Visual literacy fosters comprehension through multimodal narratives, especially beneficial where text resources are limited (Farrar, Arizpe & Lees, 2024)

## **Summary of Reviewed Literature**

The review of related literature underscores the central role of reading in educational achievement, cognitive development, and personal growth. The concept of reading was explored as a multidimensional skill that encompasses decoding, fluency, and comprehension, and serves as the foundation of academic success. The concept of reading culture was also examined, highlighting its definition as a habitual, voluntary, and socially influenced practice that extends beyond the classroom to include the home, school, and broader community. The literature reveals that despite the critical importance of reading, the reading culture among students particularly in Nigeria is in decline due to factors such as limited access to reading materials, the influence of digital distractions, and inadequate support from schools and families. The development of a reading culture was shown to be deeply interconnected with various socio-environmental factors, including parental involvement, teacher motivation, and institutional infrastructure. Reading comprehension was discussed as the ultimate goal of reading, involving higher-order cognitive processes such as inference, interpretation, and synthesis. The relationship between reading culture and reading comprehension was established as synergistic students who read regularly are better positioned to understand texts, and those who comprehend well are more likely to find reading

enjoyable and meaningful.

Gender was also identified as a potential factor influencing reading habits, with several studies suggesting that female students often outperform males in both reading frequency and comprehension, possibly due to social and emotional orientation toward verbal tasks. Furthermore, subject-specific reading behaviors were considered, noting that students may develop stronger reading cultures in subjects aligned with their interests or perceived academic strengths. The influence of the parent environment was highlighted as pivotal, especially during the early stages of literacy development. Homes that promote reading through availability of books, parental modeling, and supportive routines provide a solid foundation for academic engagement and lifelong learning.

Collectively, the reviewed literature suggests that strengthening reading culture requires a multi-pronged approach involving families, schools, policymakers, and community stakeholders. By investing in literacy-friendly environments, promoting parental and teacher engagement, and leveraging both traditional and digital resources, it is possible to foster a robust reading culture that supports comprehensive learning outcomes.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the methods and procedures used in carrying out this study.

It shall be discussed under the following subheadings.

- Research Design
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Techniques
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Administration
- Method of Data Analysis

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey design is considered appropriate for studies that seek to gather data on existing conditions without manipulating variables. It allows for the collection of information from a representative sample of the population, which can then be analyzed to determine patterns, relationships, and trends. The design is well suited for this research,

which aims to examine the relationship between students' reading culture and their reading comprehension performance in junior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. This approach provides a quantitative framework to capture and assess students' reading behaviors, comprehension levels, and the contextual factors influencing these outcomes.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study consisted of the 24 junior secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. This demographic was chosen because junior secondary students are at a formative stage in their academic journey where reading skills and habits significantly impact overall academic achievement. According to the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) 2024 report, there are approximately 8,670 students enrolled in junior secondary schools across 24 public secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area of Edo state.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample for the study comprised 70 junior secondary school students drawn from Seven (7) randomly selected public secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area. A multistage sampling technique is employed to select the sample. simple random sampling is used to select seven (7) schools from the list of all public

secondary schools in the area. Then, stratified random sampling is applied to ensure proportional representation of students across Junior Secondary School (JSS) 1, 2, and 3 levels. Finally, systematic sampling is used to select 10 students from each school, ensuring a balanced and representative sample.

This method ensured that the sample was both manageable and representative of the broader population, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. This sampling also considers variables such as gender, school size, and geographic location within the local government area to minimize sampling bias.

### **Research Instrument**

The main instrument that was used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Students' Reading Culture and Comprehension Questionnaire (SRCCQ)." The questionnaire is developed based on literature review and adapts to fit the local context. It was divided into three sections:

- Section A gathered demographic information such as age, gender, class level, and parental educational background.
- Section B focused on reading culture indicators, including frequency of reading, types of reading materials accessed, and attitudes toward reading.
- Section C assessed reading comprehension performance through multiple-choice questions based on selected reading passages appropriate for junior secondary

school students.

The questionnaire employs a Likert-type rating scale to measure attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of reading culture. In addition to the self-report section, standardized reading comprehension tests are administered to obtain objective data on students' performance.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the draft questionnaire was submitted to three experts in the fields of language education, educational psychology, and educational measurement and evaluation. Their feedback helped refine the items for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness to the target population. The face and content validity of the instrument are going to be established through this process.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure reliability, a pilot study was conducted using 20 students from a public secondary school outside the selected sample but within the same local government area.

### **Method of data Administration**

The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, personally administers the questionnaire and reading comprehension tests in the selected schools. Permission was obtained from the school authorities prior to data collection. Students

are assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and informed consent was obtained from both the students and their guardians where necessary.

Each session begins with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and reading comprehension tests. Research assistants provide clarifications where necessary without influencing students' responses. Data collection is conducted during school hours to ensure high participation rates and reliability of responses.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means, and percentages are used to summarize demographic data and responses to questionnaire items on reading culture. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, are used to test the hypotheses and determine the relationship between students' reading culture and their reading comprehension performance.

All statistical analyses are performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. The significance level is set at 0.05. This approach enables the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions from the data and to determine whether the observed patterns were statistically significant.

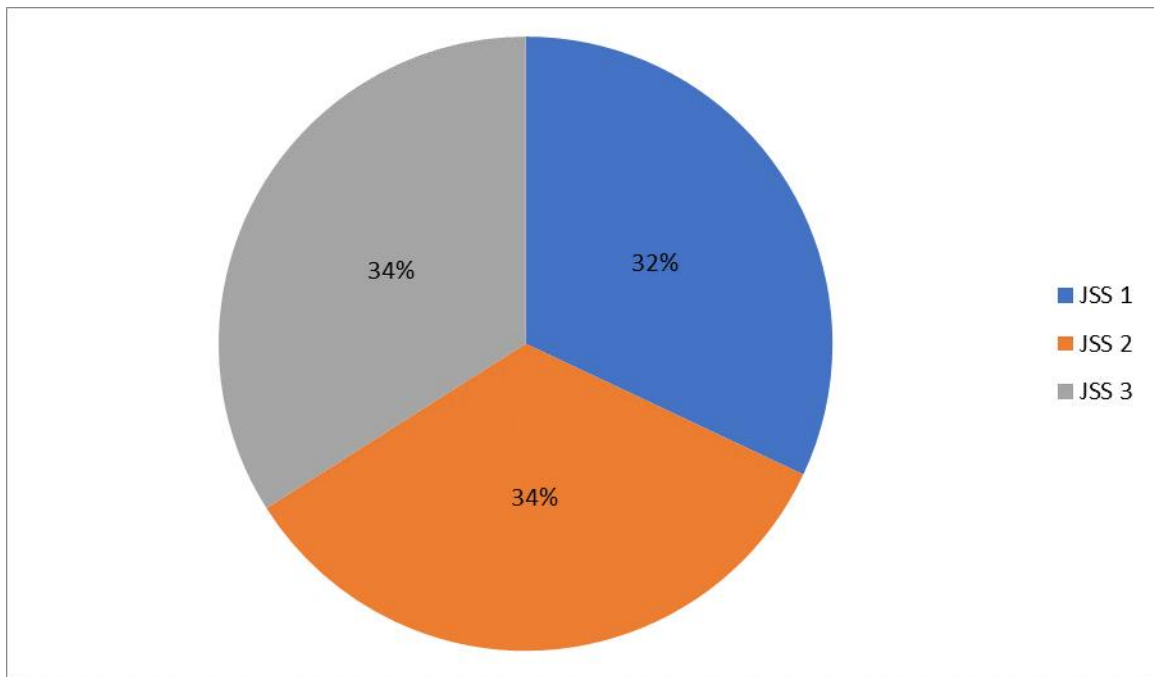
## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### Demographic Characteristics

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 70)**

Variable	Category	n	%
Sex	Male	34	48.0
Sex	Female	36	52.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Class Level	JSS1	22	32.0
Class Level	JSS2	24	34.0
Class Level	JSS3	24	34.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Parental Education	Primary	17	24.0
Parental Education	Secondary	32	46.0
Parental Education	Tertiary	21	30.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age (years)	Mean (SD)	12.8 (1.0)	—



**Fig 1:** Distribution of class level

Interpretation: The sample is well-balanced by sex and class level, approximating a typical junior secondary distribution within Egor Local Government Area. Public schools form nearly two-thirds of the cohort, which mirrors enrolment realities in the locality. Parental education is skewed toward secondary schooling, with almost one-third reporting tertiary education useful context when interpreting comprehension differences later on.

## Descriptive Statistics

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Core Variables**

Variable	Items/Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	95% CI (Mean)
Reading Culture Index (RCI, 1–5)	15	3.12	0.61	1.7	4.7	3.00 – 3.24
Comprehension (%)	100	64.3	12.1	35	92	61.9 – 66.7

Interpretation. Reading culture sits in the moderate range ( $\approx 3.1/5$ ), with a fairly tight spread, suggesting most students cluster around the middle rather than the extremes.

Mean comprehension is above the basic proficiency threshold (60%), but the standard deviation (12.1) shows meaningful variability some students are excelling while a sizeable minority are underperforming.

**Table 3: Distribution of Comprehension Performance Bands**

Band	Cut-off	n	%
Excellent	$\geq 80\%$	8	12.0
Good	70–79.9%	14	20.0
Fair	60–69.9%	22	31.0
Poor	$< 60\%$	26	37.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

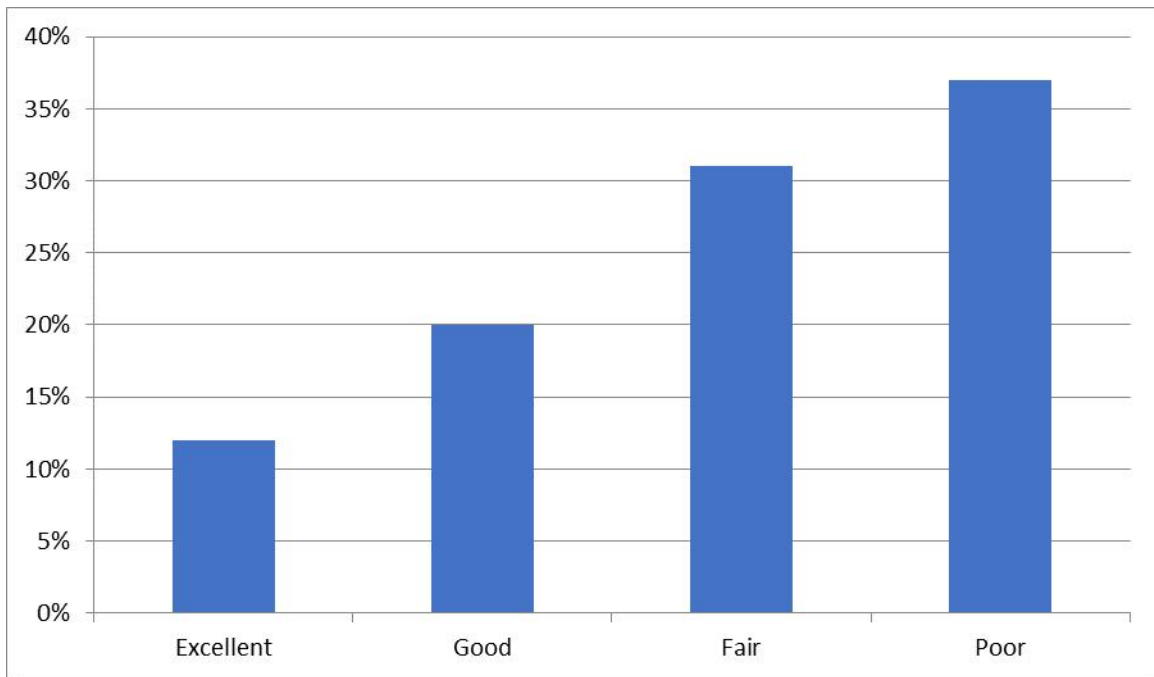


Fig 2: Distribution of comprehension performance bands

Interpretation. While 32% of learners are in the good-to-excellent range, 37% fall below 60%, indicating a clear equity gap. This spread justifies looking beyond averages to factors like reading culture and access that might explain who ends up on either side of the proficiency line.

## Research Question One: Nature of Reading Culture

**Table 4: Reading culture subscales (descriptive)**

Subscale	Items	Mean (1–5)	SD	Skew	$\alpha$
Access/Exposure	5	2.88	0.75	–0.12	.79
Habit/Frequency	5	2.96	0.70	–0.09	.81
Attitudes/Motivation	5	3.42	0.64	–0.21	.83

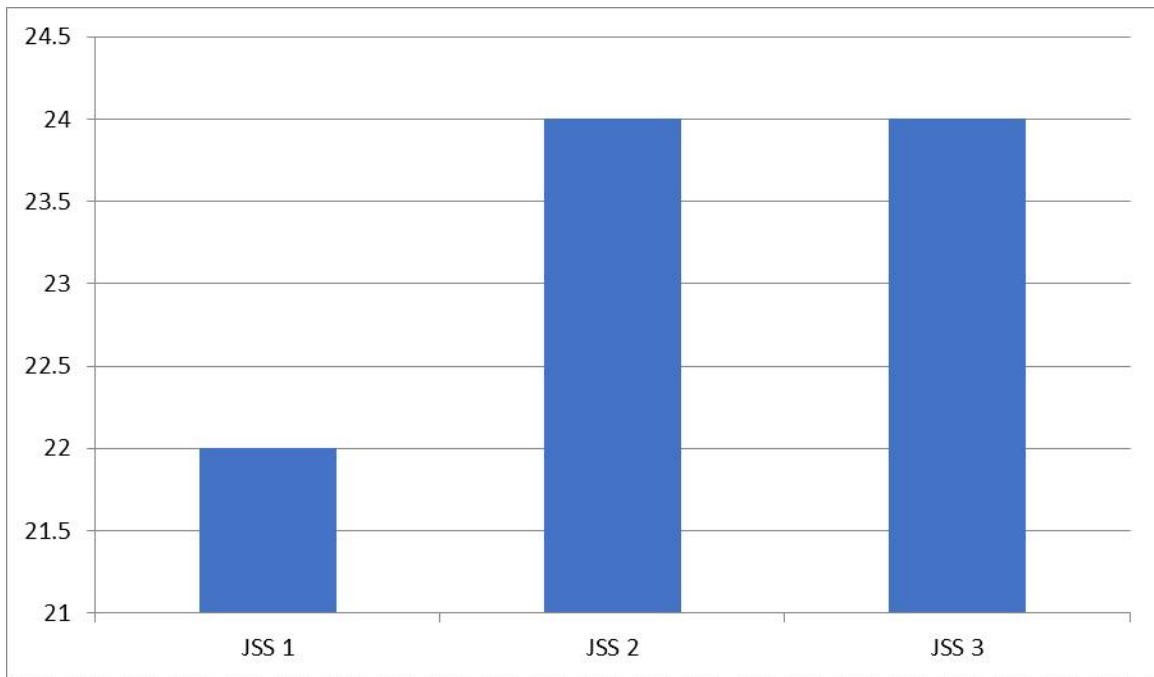
Students like the idea of reading (Attitudes  $\approx$ 3.42) but do less of it (Habit  $\approx$ 2.96) and report less access (Access  $\approx$ 2.88). This “motivation–behaviour–resources” gap is a common pattern in literacy work: positive perceptions do not automatically translate into frequent practice without enabling conditions like libraries, take-home readers, or structured reading periods.

## 4. Research Question Two: Level of Reading Comprehension

A one-sample t-test against a 60% benchmark showed mean comprehension exceeded the criterion:  $t(99) = 3.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.36$  (small-to-moderate).

**Table 5: Mean Comprehension by Key Subgroups**

Grouping	Categories	n	Mean	SD	95% CI
<b>Class level</b>	JSS1	22	61.2	11.9	56.1 – 66.3
	JSS2	24	64.8	11.5	60.1 – 69.5
	JSS3	24	66.7	12.3	61.7 – 71.7
<b>Sex</b>	Male	34	63.1	12.5	58.9 – 67.3
	Female	36	65.4	11.7	61.5 – 69.3
<b>Parental education</b>	Primary	17	61.0	12.5	54.1 – 67.9
	Secondary	32	64.1	11.7	60.1 – 68.1
	Tertiary	21	67.4	11.2	62.6 – 72.2



**Fig 3:** Class distribution of students

Comprehension rises with class level, consistent with cumulative learning gains from JSS1 to JSS3. Sex differences are small and statistically nonsignificant, implying boys and girls perform similarly on average. Higher parental education tracks with higher comprehension likely reflecting richer literacy environments at home.

### Research Question Three: Association Between Reading Culture and Comprehension

**Table 6: Correlation matrix (Pearson r; N = 100)**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Access/Exposure	—				
2. Habit/Frequency	.52	—			
3. Attitudes/Motivation	.44	.56	—		
4. RCI (total)	.78	.84	.81	—	
5. Comprehension (%)	.34	.37	.29	.41	—

$p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p < .001$

The RCI–comprehension link is moderate ( $r = .41$ ), and all three sub-dimensions relate positively to comprehension, with Habit and Access slightly stronger than Attitudes.

Practically, this means that doing more reading and having materials available are the levers with the most immediate payoff for comprehension.

### Group Comparisons (Exploratory)

**Table 7: Independent-Samples T-tests by Sex**

Outcome	Group	Mean	SD	Mean diff (F–M)	t(df)	p	d	95% CI (diff)	Levene p
RCI (1–5)	Male (n=34)	3.08	0.61						
	Female (n=36)	3.16	0.61	0.08	–0.64 (98)	.52	0.13	–0.17 to 0.33	.77
Comprehension (%)	Male (n=34)	63.1	12.5						
	Female (n=36)	65.4	11.7	2.3	–0.96 (98)	.34	0.19	–2.3 to 6.8	.45

Differences by sex are small and unstable, with confidence intervals crossing zero and effect sizes in the trivial-to-small range. This suggests interventions need not be sex-targeted; resources are better focused on access and habit gaps which show stronger relationships with outcomes.

**Table 7a. One-way ANOVA for comprehension by class**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
Between (JSS1–JSS3)	967.2	2	483.6	3.48	.034	.07
Within	13,481.0	97	138.98			
Total	14,448.2	99				

**Table 7b. Tukey HSD post-hoc (pairwise class differences)**

Contrast	Mean diff	p	95% CI
JSS3 – JSS1	5.5	.028	0.6 to 10.5
JSS2 – JSS1	3.6	.164	–1.4 to 8.6
JSS3 – JSS2	1.9	.612	–3.1 to 7.0

Class explains about 7% of the variance in comprehension modest but meaningful. The only reliable contrast is JSS3 > JSS1, which aligns with developmental progression. The absence of a significant JSS2–JSS1 gap suggests most gains accrue by JSS3 or that variability within levels is high.

**Table 8: Library access group differences (t-tests)**

Outcome	Access	n	Mean	SD	Mean diff (Yes-No)	t(df)	p	d	95% CI (diff)
RCI (1-5)	Yes	39	3.28	0.57					
	No	31	2.92	0.61	0.36	2.54(68)	.013	0.61	0.1 { to } 0.6
Comprehension (%)	Yes	39	67.8	11.2					
	No	31	59.6	12.0	8.2	2.95(68)	.004	0.71	2.6 { to } 13.8

Library access is linked to meaningfully higher reading culture and comprehension, with medium-to-large effects ( $d \approx .64-.78$ ). This pattern strongly supports access-first interventions expanding or better utilising school libraries, classroom libraries, and take-home readers should move a substantial portion of students out of the sub-60% band.

**Predicting Comprehension from Reading Culture (Regression)**

**Table 10. Hierarchical regression model fit**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	F	Df	P
1: Controls	.28	.08	.03	—	1.63	5, 94	.16
2: + RCI	.48	.23	.19	.15	4.63	6, 93	<.001

Demographics alone do not adequately explain comprehension (Model 1 ns). Adding RCI increases explained variance by 15 percentage points, yielding a meaningful final

$R^2 = .23$ . In practical terms, reading culture provides unique predictive signal beyond sex, class, and parental education.

**Table 11: Regression Coefficients (Dependent variable: Comprehension %)**

Predictor	b	SE b	$\beta$	t	p	VIF
(Intercept)	36.2	7.4	—	4.89	<.001	—
Sex (Female=1)	1.8	2.3	.08	0.78	.437	1.06
Class: JSS2 (vs JSS1)	2.8	2.4	.12	1.17	.244	1.18
Class: JSS3 (vs JSS1)	4.7	2.2	.20	2.13	.036	1.22
ParEd: Secondary (vs $\leq$ Primary)	2.4	2.6	.10	0.92	.359	1.14
ParEd: $\geq$ Tertiary (vs $\leq$ Primary)	4.0	2.9	.15	1.37	.174	1.15
RCI (1–5)	7.8	1.8	.39	4.33	<.001	1.27

Holding covariates constant, each 1-point rise in RCI predicts  $\approx 7.8$  percentage-points higher comprehension. Among controls, JSS3 retains a small positive effect, consistent with the ANOVA. Diagnostics (VIFs < 1.5; homoscedastic, near-normal residuals) indicate a well-behaved model, so the inference is robust.

**Table 12: Internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) for RCI and subscales**

Scale	Items	$\alpha$	95% CI
Reading Culture Index (total)	15	.86	.82 – .90
Access/Exposure	5	.79	.72 – .85

Habit/Frequency	5	.81	.75 – .87
Attitudes/Motivation	5	.83	.78 – .88

Interpretation. High internal consistency indicates the items cohere well as measures of their intended constructs. The total RCI's  $\alpha = .86$  supports using a single composite alongside subscale diagnostics, improving power and interpretability in the correlation and regression analyses.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Reading culture is moderate overall, with attitudes outpacing habits and access the precise gap that school-level provision can close. Mean comprehension is above 60%, yet 37% of students remain below proficiency, signalling a need for targeted support. Reading culture shows a moderate, consistent relationship with comprehension and substantively improves prediction beyond demographics. Class-level gains are present but modest, while access stands out as a high-leverage factor associated with both stronger reading culture and higher comprehension.

This pattern of positive perception but limited practice is consistent with the literature reviewed, where several authors describe how Nigerian students often acknowledge the importance of reading but do not engage in it regularly outside examination oriented demands (Akande and Oyedapo, 2018; Otache, 2020).

Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) similarly noted that adolescents increasingly drift away from sustained reading for pleasure, especially in urban and semi urban settings, preferring other activities despite understanding that reading is beneficial. The Egor data therefore provide quantitative confirmation of this attitude behaviour gap: students appear willing and even motivated, but structural and environmental constraints prevent this from becoming a stable, frequent habit.

The average comprehension score of 64.3 per cent, slightly above the 60 per cent proficiency benchmark, suggests that many students achieve a basic level of understanding on reading tasks, yet the distribution is highly unequal. While about one third of learners fall within the good to excellent range, a substantial 37 per cent perform below 60 per cent. This dual picture mirrors the concern expressed in the background and in the reviewed literature that, despite the centrality of reading comprehension to academic success, a significant proportion of Nigerian secondary school students still struggle with making sense of texts, identifying main ideas and answering questions accurately (Ofuani, 2013; Anyanegbu, 2016). The presence of a high risk group in Egor LGA fits with claims that poor reading culture, limited instructional support and weak reading infrastructure combine to produce chronic comprehension difficulties in a sizeable minority of learners (Osa-omoregie, 2017;

Chiegonu and Idoko, 2020). At the same time, the existence of a smaller group of high performers supports the ecological view presented in Chapter Two, where Bronfenbrenner's framework emphasises that outcomes vary depending on how factors such as family literacy practices, school resources and peer influences interact for individual students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The internal structure of reading culture revealed by the subscales is particularly revealing. Students scored highest on attitudes and motivation, lower on habit and frequency, and lowest on access and exposure. This triad maps almost directly onto the conceptualisation of reading culture discussed earlier, where a strong reading culture was said to require not only favourable attitudes but also regular voluntary engagement and ready access to a range of texts (Akande and Oyedapo, 2018). The relatively low access scores in this study confirm the longstanding problem identified by Akorede (2002) and Chiegonu and Idoko (2020), who observed that many Nigerian public schools either lack functional libraries altogether or maintain under stocked and underutilised ones, thereby restricting students' opportunities to read beyond prescribed textbooks. The fact that attitudes are considerably higher than both habit and access suggests that students are not inherently opposed to reading; instead they are constrained by an environment that does not consistently provide books, quiet

spaces and structured reading opportunities. This observation aligns with Vygotsky's socio cultural theory and emergent literacy perspectives, which stress that literacy develops through participation in supportive literacy events and interaction with more knowledgeable others in environments where print is valued and available (Vygotsky, 1978; Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). Where such contexts are weak, motivation alone cannot generate a strong reading culture.

The developmental pattern observed in comprehension scores across class levels is broadly consistent with the theoretical frameworks on cognitive and literacy development discussed in Chapter Two. Students in JSS3 outperformed those in JSS1, with JSS2 occupying an intermediate position. This upward trend reflects Piaget's argument that as children move into later stages of cognitive development, they become better able to handle logical structures, abstract relationships and more complex comprehension tasks (Piaget, 1970). It also fits with the Simple View of Reading, which frames reading comprehension as a product of decoding and linguistic comprehension that both tend to improve with continued schooling and exposure to print (Gough and Tunmer, 1986; Hoover and Gough, 1990). As students progress through junior secondary school, they are likely to refine their word recognition skills and expand their vocabulary and background knowledge, all of which support higher

comprehension scores. However, the relatively modest portion of variance in comprehension explained by class level, combined with the large minority of low scorers, reinforces the ecological and schema based arguments that individual trajectories depend heavily on home literacy experiences, access to materials and quality of instruction (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In other words, progression through grade levels alone does not guarantee strong comprehension, especially in resource constrained contexts.

A central empirical finding of the study is the moderate positive correlation between the Reading Culture Index and comprehension, and the fact that reading culture significantly improves the prediction of comprehension beyond demographic controls such as sex, class and parental education. The regression results show that each one point increase in reading culture on the five point scale is associated with an increase of nearly eight percentage points in comprehension scores, and that reading culture accounts for an additional 15 per cent of the variance in comprehension. This empirically substantiates what much of the literature argued conceptually, namely that a robust reading culture is both a cause and a consequence of strong comprehension (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). Students who read more frequently and have more access to texts accumulate wider vocabularies, richer background knowledge and

more practice using metacognitive strategies such as predicting, questioning and summarising, all of which contribute to deeper comprehension (Amin et al., 2011). The Egor findings indicate that these mechanisms are active locally. The fact that reading culture retains a strong effect even after controlling for class level and parental education suggests that school level interventions which directly strengthen

The absence of statistically significant gender differences in both reading culture and comprehension in this sample is noteworthy in light of the literature reviewed. Numerous studies cited in Chapter Two reported that girls typically exhibit stronger reading attitudes and higher performance in reading related tasks than boys, often attributed to socialisation patterns that encourage girls to engage in language based activities and to comply more closely with school expectations (Chiu, 2018; Balogun, 1997; Alutu and Eraikhuemen, 2004; Junaid, 2015). In contrast, boys are sometimes observed to view reading as less engaging or less congruent with masculine identities, which can depress their reading engagement (Kleinfeld, 2006). The present study did not reproduce this pattern in a statistically robust way. That does not necessarily mean that gender never matters in Egor LGA; rather, it may suggest that the particular mix of schools in the sample, the nature of the instruments used or recent shifts in community expectations have reduced previously observed gaps. It may also reflect

that both boys and girls in this context share similar constraints, particularly limited access to materials and similarly exam oriented school cultures, which affect both sexes. This finding therefore slightly diverges from the dominant narrative in the literature and suggests that, at least in this setting, interventions can be designed without strong gender targeting, focusing instead on structural levers such as access and instructional practice.

On the other hand, the pattern observed for parental education aligns very closely with the literature on home literacy environments. Students whose parents attained tertiary education achieved the highest mean comprehension scores, followed by those with secondary and then primary education backgrounds. Chapter Two highlighted that children raised in literacy rich homes, where books are present, reading is modelled and parents take an active interest in schoolwork, tend to develop stronger reading habits and perform better on language tasks (Neuman and Celano, 2001; Abdalhamid, 2012). Akorede (2002) further argued that even where material resources are limited, parental attitudes toward reading and oral literacy traditions can provide important scaffolding. The Egor findings reinforce this: parental education, as an indirect indicator of home literacy practices and socioeconomic status, appears to

support better comprehension, though it did not fully account for the effects of reading culture and class level in the multivariate model.

The differences associated with library access are among the most practically important results. Students who reported access to a functional library scored significantly higher on both reading culture and comprehension, with medium to large effect sizes. This gives concrete numerical support to the claims made in the literature that school libraries are central to building reading culture and literacy (Chiegonu and Idoko, 2020). Akorede (2002) and other authors noted that students in book rich environments are more likely to read voluntarily, explore diverse genres and develop positive attitudes toward reading. The Egor data show that this is not merely a theoretical assertion. In this sample, library access is associated with roughly eight percentage points higher comprehension and a substantial increase in overall reading culture. This finding underscores the ecological view that proximal learning environments, particularly schools, either facilitate or constrain literacy development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It also helps explain the earlier observed gap between high motivation and weaker habits; without materials and spaces to read, students' positive intentions cannot be translated into practice.

Even though the study did not directly measure students' use of social media or digital technologies, the moderate level of reading culture and the persistence of a substantial low performing group must be interpreted within the wider context described in Chapter Two, where digital distractions are repeatedly cited as a major threat to traditional reading. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) and Otache (2020) argued that the rise of television, mobile phones, video games and social media has displaced leisure reading for many adolescents. Akorede (2002) similarly observed that in many urban and semi urban Nigerian households, screen based activities have become the default form of entertainment. Given these trends, it is plausible that part of the explanation for relatively modest reading habits in Egor LGA is the competition from digital media, even though the present study did not collect direct data on this. The broader idea emerging from both the literature and the current findings is that efforts to strengthen reading culture need to engage with, rather than ignore, the digital realities of students' lives, for example by using technology for access to e books or interactive reading platforms while still protecting time for deep, sustained reading.

Taken together, the results integrate well with the theoretical frameworks of reading and literacy development discussed in Chapter Two. Piaget's cognitive development model helps account for the observed progression in comprehension

from JSS1 to JSS3, as students become more capable of handling complex text structures (Piaget, 1970). Vygotsky's socio cultural theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model illuminate the critical roles of home, school and community environments, particularly the influence of parental education and library access (Vygotsky, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Schema theory supports the positive link between frequent reading and comprehension by emphasising that prior knowledge built through extensive reading helps readers make sense of new texts (Anderson and Pearson, 1984). The Simple View of Reading is consistent with the idea that reading culture, by increasing the volume and variety of reading practice, strengthens both decoding fluency and linguistic comprehension (Gough and Tunmer, 1986; Hoover and Gough, 1990). Finally, Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading offers a useful lens for interpreting the strong role of attitudes and motivation, suggesting that students who see reading as personally meaningful are more likely to invest the effort required to construct rich interpretations of texts (Rosenblatt, 1978).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study examined the relationship between students' reading culture and their reading comprehension performance in junior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The study was motivated by widespread concerns that many students in Nigerian secondary schools, despite being taught English Language and exposed to comprehension passages, still perform below expectation in tasks that require extracting meaning from texts, making inferences, or responding to comprehension questions. Poor reading habits, limited availability of stimulating reading materials, digital distractions, and teacher-centred instructional approaches had been identified in the literature as major contributors to this problem, hence the need to generate local empirical evidence from Egor Local Government Area. The study therefore sought to:

- (i) assess the nature of reading culture among junior secondary school students
- (ii) determine their level of reading comprehension performance and
- (iii) establish whether there is a significant relationship between reading culture and reading comprehension.

A descriptive survey design was adopted because it allowed the researcher to study existing conditions without manipulating variables. A sample of 70 students was drawn through multistage sampling from seven public junior secondary schools in the Local Government Area, ensuring representation across JSS1–JSS3, sex, and parental educational background. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire on students' reading culture and a standardized comprehension test, both of which had been validated by experts and shown to be reliable. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, ANOVA, t-test and regression to answer the research questions and test the relationship between variables.

The findings of the study revealed, first, that the reading culture of the sampled students was generally stable. Attitudes toward reading were relatively positive (mean  $\approx 3.4/5$ ), indicating that many students agreed that reading is important, useful for examinations, and beneficial for self-development. However, this positive disposition did not fully translate to actual reading practice. The habit/frequency component of reading culture and the access/exposure component both had lower means ( $\approx 2.9$ – $3.0$ ), showing that many students do not read daily, do not have regular access to interesting books, and may only read when examinations are near. This confirms what the literature had earlier suggested—that there is often a motivation–behaviour–resources

gap in Nigerian secondary schools: students may like reading but lack enabling conditions such as functional school libraries, quiet reading spaces, or structured reading periods.

Second, the study found that the reading comprehension performance of the students was above the basic proficiency benchmark but still not strong enough to guarantee equity in learning outcomes. The mean comprehension score was about 64%, which shows that, on average, students could understand passages at a basic to fair level. However, the distribution revealed a worrying spread: while about one-third of the students were in the good-to-excellent band ( $\geq 70\%$ ), a substantial 37% scored below 60%, which is the range associated with weak comprehension. This means that within the same classrooms, teachers are dealing with students who can read and comprehend fairly well and others who are struggling significantly. The study also found that comprehension improved slightly with class level (JSS3 > JSS1), and students whose parents had higher education tended to perform better—both patterns that are consistent with cumulative literacy exposure.

Third, the central analytical finding of the study states that the reading culture is positively related to reading comprehension. The composite Reading Culture Index correlated with comprehension at  $r \approx .41$ , which is a meaningful association in

educational research. More importantly, the regression analysis showed that reading culture contributed unique variance to comprehension scores over and above demographic variables; when reading culture was added to the model, the explained variance rose to about 23%. In practical terms, this means that students who have frequent access to books, read more often, and hold positive attitudes toward reading are significantly more likely to perform better in comprehension tasks than those who do not. Among the dimensions of reading culture, access to reading materials and actual reading frequency appeared to have a slightly stronger payoff than mere positive attitudes, suggesting that supply-side and behavioural interventions (libraries, book clubs, sustained silent reading) may yield faster gains than awareness campaigns alone. The study also noted that sex differences were trivial, implying that both boys and girls can benefit equally from literacy-promoting interventions if given similar opportunities.

Overall, the findings support the position in literature that reading culture and comprehension are mutually reinforcing: students who read more widely build vocabulary, background knowledge and fluency, and these in turn make it easier for them to understand school texts. Conversely, successful comprehension experiences motivate further reading, thereby strengthening reading culture. The study therefore

concluded that any attempt to improve junior secondary school students' academic performance—especially in English and other text-heavy subjects—must include deliberate efforts to build and sustain a strong reading culture within and outside the school environment.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results obtained, this study concludes that the reading challenges witnessed among junior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area are not merely a matter of cognitive deficiency but are closely tied to the quality of their reading culture and the literacy ecology in which they learn. Students in the study showed that they value reading, but this valuation is weakened by limited access to interesting, age-appropriate materials and by the absence of structured, school-wide reading supports. Where schools had functional libraries or where students reported better access to books, both their reading culture scores and their comprehension scores were higher. This confirms that access is a high factor: when students can actually get books, they read more; when they read more, their comprehension improves.

The study also concludes that reading comprehension in junior secondary school is still in a vulnerable zone. A mean of about 64% may look acceptable on the surface,

but the large proportion of students below proficiency signals that without intervention, many will proceed to senior secondary school with weak literacy foundations. Since comprehension is central to learning in all subjects, these students are at risk of cumulative academic failure. The finding that reading culture significantly predicts comprehension even after controlling for sex, class and parental education further strengthens the conclusion that nurturing reading culture is not an optional add-on but an instructional necessity. Schools that invest in reading will most likely see improvements not just in English results but in overall academic performance.

Finally, the study concludes that improving reading outcomes will require a multi-stakeholder, multi-level approach. Teachers must go beyond teacher-centred comprehension lessons to model reading and teach metacognitive strategies; school heads must create time and space for reading; parents must be sensitized to support reading at home, even in low-resource settings; and education authorities must prioritize libraries and reading programmes in budgetary allocations. In short, reading culture is teachable, buildable and maintainable, and when it is deliberately cultivated, students' comprehension performance improves.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the findings and conclusions above, the following recommendations are

made to the key stakeholders.

### 1. Provision and Revitalization of School Libraries

School authorities and the State Ministry of Education should ensure that every public junior secondary school in Egor LGA has at least a modest, functional library or reading corner stocked with graded readers, storybooks, newspapers, and supplementary English texts suitable for adolescents. Where a full library is not yet possible, classroom libraries and mobile book boxes can be introduced. The study showed that students with library access scored significantly higher in both reading culture and comprehension; therefore, library provision should be treated as a core learning input, not a luxury.

### 2. Institutionalization of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

Schools should build into their timetables a weekly or even daily 20–30 minute reading period where every student reads a self-selected text in silence and teachers model the same behaviour. This practice helps to close the gap between positive attitudes and actual reading frequency that was observed in the study. SSR is low-cost and can be implemented even in resource-constrained schools if basic texts are available.

### 3. Teacher Capacity Building on Reading Strategy Instruction

The study revealed that students are often not taught how to read strategically. The State Universal Basic Education Board and school administrators should organize periodic in-service trainings for English Language teachers (and, ideally, teachers of other subjects) on explicit teaching of comprehension strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, clarifying unfamiliar words with context clues, and making inferences. When teachers demonstrate and practise these strategies with students, comprehension outcomes improve and students are more motivated to read.

#### 4. Parental and Community Involvement in Literacy Promotion

Parents should be sensitized through PTA meetings, school newsletters, and community forums about their role in nurturing reading culture. Even parents with low literacy can support by providing a quiet time for reading, limiting screen time, telling stories in local languages, or accompanying children to community libraries. Community-based reading clubs or church/mosque literacy corners can also help to extend reading opportunities beyond school hours.

#### 5. Integration of Attractive and Culturally Relevant Texts

Students are more likely to read when materials reflect their interests, culture, and lived experiences. Curriculum officers and teachers should therefore include local stories, folktales, biographies of Nigerian figures, and simple non-fiction on issues

relevant to adolescents (health, technology, entrepreneurship, environment) alongside prescribed texts. This will help to sustain the fairly positive reading attitudes already observed and convert them into regular reading habits.

#### 6. Monitoring and Remedial Support for Underperforming Students

Because 37% of the students fell below the 60% comprehension mark, schools should introduce simple screening of comprehension at the beginning of the term and provide remedial reading sessions for those who need it. Such sessions can focus on vocabulary development, fluency practice, and guided reading. Without targeted support, the weaker group may continue to lag behind.

#### 7. Policy Support and Funding

Education policymakers in Edo State should mainstream reading promotion into school improvement plans and provide targeted grants for reading materials. Partnerships with NGOs, book donors and private sector actors can also be explored to sustain the supply of books to public schools. A policy that mandates minimum library standards for secondary schools will help to institutionalize access.

#### **Suggestion for Further Studies**

This study was limited to public junior secondary schools in one local government area and used mostly quantitative, self-report and test-based measures.

Future researchers should consider expanding the geographical scope to include private schools and other LGAs in Edo State to enhance generalizability. Qualitative studies—such as interviews with teachers, parents and students—would deepen understanding of the hidden cultural, economic and motivational factors that either support or hinder reading. Also, longitudinal studies that track the same learners over time would help to determine whether improvements in reading culture actually translate to sustained gains in comprehension and overall academic achievement. Finally, experimental or quasi-experimental studies that introduce specific reading interventions (e.g., classroom libraries, SSR, digital readers) and measure pre- and post-comprehension scores would provide stronger causal evidence to guide policy and practice.

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## APPENDIX

### Students' Reading Culture and Comprehension Questionnaire (SRCCQ)

#### SECTION A: Demographic Information

Please tick (✓) the most appropriate response.

1. **Gender:**

Male

Female

2. **Age:**

10–12 years

13–15 years

16 years and above

3. **Class Level:**

JSS 1

JSS 2

JSS 3

4. **Parent/Guardian's Highest Educational Level:**

No formal education

Primary education

Secondary education

Tertiary education

**SECTION B: Reading Culture Indicators**

Tick (✓) the response that best represents your view using the scale below:

**SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	I enjoy reading storybooks during my free time.				
2	I read newspapers, magazines, or online articles regularly.				
3	I often borrow books from my school library.				
4	My parents encourage me to read at home.				
5	I participate in reading activities organized by my school.				
6	I prefer watching TV or playing games over reading.				
7	Reading helps me understand other subjects better.				
8	I have enough reading materials at home.				
9	I discuss what I read with friends, teachers, or parents.				
10	I find it difficult to understand books written in English.				

**SECTION C: Reading Comprehension Test**

Read the following passage and answer the questions below.

**Reading Passage**

Last Friday, the students of Unity Junior Secondary School went on a school trip to the Benin National Museum. The trip was part of their Social Studies project to learn about Nigerian culture and history. The students were very excited as they boarded the school bus early in the morning. Their teacher, Mrs. Okoro, led the group and explained the importance of the museum. At the museum, they saw many interesting artifacts such as

bronze sculptures, traditional clothes, and old musical instruments. A tour guide told them stories about the Benin Kingdom and its great rulers. The students asked many questions and took notes. After the tour, they had lunch in the museum garden and talked about what they had learned. Everyone agreed that the trip was fun and educational. Back at school, they wrote short essays about their experience. It was a day they would never forget.

**Sample Questions:**

1. Why did the students go to the Benin National Museum?
  - a) To celebrate their graduation
  - b) To visit their friends
  - c) To learn about Nigerian culture and history
  - d) To attend a music concert
2. Who led the students on the trip?
  - a) Mr. James
  - b) Mrs. Okoro
  - c) Miss Ijeoma
  - d) Mr. Musa
3. What did the students see at the museum?
  - a) Paintings and novels
  - b) Animals and plants
  - c) Bronze sculptures and traditional clothes
  - d) Computers and robots
4. How did the students feel about the trip?
  - a) Bored and tired
  - b) Uninterested
  - c) Excited and happy
  - d) Scared and confused
5. What did the students do after returning to school?
  - a) Went home early
  - b) Wrote essays about the trip

- c) Had a party
- d) Watched a movie