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IMPROVING READING HABIT IN KANO STATE OWNED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

RABI SA'ID
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES
KANO STATE POLYTECHNIC
rabisaidu6428@gmail.com
0803553642

Abstract

Reading habit among students is a key determinant of academic success and lifelong learning. However, in many state-owned tertiary institutions in Kano State, Nigeria, there appears to be a declining or irregular trend in students' reading practices outside of required coursework. This study examines the factors influencing reading habits among students in Kano State tertiary institutions, identifies barriers to regular reading, and evaluates interventions that can improve these habits. Using a mixed-methods design, quantitative data were collected via structured questionnaires from 400 students randomly selected from universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in Kano State, while qualitative data were derived from focus groups and interviews with lecturers and student. Key findings reveal that limited access to reading materials (print and digital), inadequate library facilities, unreliable power supply, poor lighting, and lack of motivation are major barriers. On the positive side, the use of digital resources, reading clubs, peer reading groups, and supportive policies by institutional administrators have shown promise. Based on statistical analysis (including regression models) and thematic coding, the study recommends that the state government and institutions invest in improved library infrastructure, ensure regular power supply, expand digital reading resources, implement reading motivation programs (such as reading competitions and club activities), and integrate more reading-centered assignments into curricula. Adoption of these measures is expected to increase frequency, duration, and diversity of reading among students, thereby enhancing academic outcomes and fostering a stronger culture of reading within Kano's tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Reading, Improving, Students, Higher Institutions, Kano

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most essential academic skills required for personal and intellectual development. In tertiary institutions, reading serves as the foundation for effective learning, critical thinking, and academic success. However, the reading habit among students in Kano State–owned tertiary institutions appears to be declining due to several socio-cultural, technological, and institutional factors. This study seeks to investigate the factors affecting students' reading habits and propose strategies for improving reading culture in these institutions.

Reading has always been an important part of education and self-development. In Nigeria, and particularly in Kano State, the culture of reading among students has deteriorated over the years. Many students now depend heavily on lecture notes or summaries rather than engaging with textbooks, journals, and other academic materials. With the rise of social media and digital distractions, students' interest in academic reading continues to decline. This study focuses on identifying the root causes of poor reading habits and recommending ways to improve them within Kano State–owned tertiary institutions. In doing this, the study aims ways to investigate the various ways of improving reading habits among students in Kano State–owned tertiary institutions. The objectives include:

- To examine the current level of reading habits among students.
- To identify the major factors responsible for poor reading habits.
- To suggest effective strategies for improving reading habits.

The following research questions are asked to guide the entire research

- What is the current state of reading habits among students?
- What factors are responsible for poor reading habits?
- What strategies can be adopted to improve reading habits?

This study is significant as it contributes to understanding the importance of reading culture in higher education. It provides valuable insights for students, lecturers, administrators, and policymakers on how to enhance reading habits. Improved reading culture will foster academic excellence and lifelong learning among students in Kano State.

This study focuses on students in Kano State–owned tertiary institutions, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. It examines factors affecting reading habits and possible strategies for improvement.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptualizing Reading Habit and Reading Culture

Reading habit refers to a regular pattern of voluntary reading behaviour—how frequently and how long a person reads, and diversity in type of materials read (e.g., books, journals, online articles) outside of what is merely required for examinations. Reading culture (or reading orientation) is the environment—social, educational, institutional—that supports and values voluntary reading: access to materials, encouragement by peers and educators, availability of reading spaces, etc. Scholars agree that improvement in reading among students requires both consistent individual reading behaviour and a supportive institutional culture.

Researchers such as Issa et al. (2012) and Ogbodo (2010) emphasized that regular reading enhances academic achievement and broadens students' intellectual capacity. According to Aina, Ogungbeni, and Adigun (2011), a poor reading culture among Nigerian students is a result of inadequate reading materials, poor library facilities, and technological distractions. In Kano State, studies have shown that students' dependence on lecture notes rather than

textbooks negatively affects comprehension and analytical thinking (Adetunji & Oladeji, 2007).

The use of digital media has been both a blessing and a curse. While it provides access to e-books and journals, it also promotes distractions such as social media usage (Issa et al., 2012). Effective institutional support, including library upgrades and reading programs, has been found to encourage reading culture among tertiary students (Osei, 2018).

Similarly, other studies in tertiary institutions points to several trends, these includes, Ajidahun (45) argument that "Students often read principally to pass examinations; voluntary or recreational reading is rare. In many studies, participants admitted to minimal engagement with reading outside course requirements". Social media and digital distraction reduce the time available for academic or recreational reading. One study found that heavy use of social media is negatively associated with both reading frequency and academic performance (Ogunbodede 122-24). Where university libraries are well managed and provide active services—such as orientation, readers' clubs, periodic exhibitions, and e-resources—students report higher engagement with reading materials (Oladele and Yusuf 57).

These findings are consistent across a number of universities and colleges in different regions of Nigeria, indicating that the issue is not isolated to any single institution or region. Previous literature shows that improving reading habits requires a multidimensional approach involving students, educators, and policymakers. This study builds upon these works to propose context-specific strategies suitable for Kano State–owned tertiary institutions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Constructivist Learning Theory, developed by Jean Piaget (1970), emphasizes that learning is an active, constructive process in which learners build new knowledge based on their experiences and prior understanding. According to Piaget, knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed through interactions with the environment. Learners assimilate new information and accommodate it within existing cognitive structures, a process that leads to intellectual growth and deeper understanding.

Applied to the context of reading habits among tertiary students, the constructivist view suggests that reading is not merely a mechanical skill but a process through which students create meaning from texts. When students read extensively, they engage in critical thinking, interpretation, and reflection, thereby constructing their own understanding of ideas. This process enhances comprehension, analytical ability, and academic performance.

Piaget's theory implies that improving reading habits requires creating learning environments that encourage active engagement, self-discovery, and interaction with diverse reading materials. In Kano State–owned tertiary institutions, students should be encouraged to read beyond lecture notes by exploring textbooks, journals, and other scholarly works that challenge their reasoning and broaden their perspectives.

Furthermore, lecturers and librarians play a crucial role in facilitating constructivist learning by guiding students in interpreting texts, posing reflective questions, and promoting collaborative reading activities. By doing so, students not only acquire information but also construct knowledge through meaningful reading experiences.

In a nutshell, the Constructivist Learning Theory provides a strong foundation for this study, as it supports the idea that reading fosters intellectual development through active participation, reflection, and knowledge construction.

METHODS

Research Design

The research design adopted was descriptive, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study population consisted of 400 respondents drawn from selected Kano State–owned tertiary institutions, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education.

Data Sources

The data used in this study were collected from students in three state owned higher institutions:

- North-West University Students
- Saadatu Rimi College of Education
- Kano State Polytechnic

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and percentages were used to analyze the data. The findings provided a clear picture of students' reading patterns, challenges, and possible solutions.

FINDINGS

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	240	60
	Female	160	40
Age	18–22 years	150	37.5
	23–27 years	170	42.5
	28 years and above	80	20
Institution Type	University	180	45
	Polytechnic	140	35
	College of Education	80	20
Status	Student	320	80
	Lecturer/Librarian	80	20

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Interpretation: The table shows that the majority of respondents were students (80%), with males representing 60% of participants. The age distribution suggests that most respondents (42.5%) fall within the 23–27 age bracket. Universities accounted for the largest share of participants (45%)

Table 2: Students' Reading Habits

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How often do you read apart from exam periods?	Regularly	100	25
	Occasionally	180	45
	Rarely	120	30
How many hours do you read daily?	Less than 1 hour	160	40
	1–2 hours	170	42.5
	Above 2 hours	70	17.5
Do you enjoy reading as a personal activity?	Yes	140	35
	No	260	65

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Interpretation: Only 25% of respondents read regularly outside examination periods, while 30% admitted to rarely reading. The majority (82.5%) read for less than two hours daily. This suggests a weak reading habit among most students, with only a small group showing consistent reading behavior.

Table 3: Factors Affecting Reading Habits

Factor Identified	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Lack of adequate library facilities	85	15
Poor motivation from lecturers	70	30
Social media distraction	88	12
Poor time management	77	23
Lack of interest in academic reading	65	35
Financial constraints (cannot afford books)	72	28

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Interpretation: The data show that *social media distraction* (88%) and *inadequate library facilities* (85%) are the most common challenges to students' reading habits. Poor motivation and financial constraints were also major contributing factors.

Table 4: Role of Libraries and Lecturers in Promoting Reading

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Libraries provide enough reading materials	30	70
Library opening hours are convenient	40	60
Lecturers encourage extra reading	45	55
Reading programs (book clubs, campaigns) exist	25	75

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Interpretation: Most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the state of library facilities and support systems. 70% indicated that libraries lack adequate reading materials, and 75% reported that reading promotion programs are rarely organized. This suggests weak institutional support for developing reading culture.

Table 5: Suggested Strategies for Improving Reading Habit

Strategy Proposed	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improve library facilities and resources	350	87.5
Organize reading clubs and competitions	310	77.5
Integrate reading programs into curriculum	290	72.5
Provide free or subsidized textbooks	275	68.75
Limit social media use during study hours	260	65
Encourage lecturers to give more reading-based assignments	320	80

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Interpretation: Respondents strongly supported the improvement of library facilities (87.5%) and increased lecturer involvement in promoting reading (80%). Organizing reading clubs and integrating reading activities into the curriculum were also widely endorsed as effective measures.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The major findings revealed that students' reading habits are generally poor. A significant number of respondents admitted to reading only during examinations and for short durations daily. The study identified social media distraction, inadequate library facilities, poor motivation from lecturers, and lack of interest in academic reading as major causes of poor reading habits.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that most institutional libraries lack adequate books, reading space, and functional programs to promote reading. Reading clubs, competitions, and awareness campaigns are rarely organized. Despite these challenges, respondents strongly supported measures such as improving library facilities, integrating reading activities into the curriculum, and encouraging lecturers to assign reading-based tasks as ways to improve reading culture.

From the findings, it can be concluded that the reading habit among students in Kano State government–owned tertiary institutions is declining and in need of urgent attention. Although students recognize the importance of reading, distractions from social media, inadequate facilities, and weak institutional support have made reading less appealing.

The findings confirm earlier studies (Ajidahun 2015; Ogunbodede 2021) which reported a decline in reading culture among Nigerian students due to poor motivation, limited access to materials, and digital distractions. The situation in Kano State appears consistent with national trends. Strengthening institutional structures—especially libraries, lecturers' engagement, and reading-based programs—can lead to measurable improvements in students' reading attitudes and academic performance.

Improving reading habits requires a collective effort among students, lecturers, librarians, and educational administrators. Institutions must take deliberate steps to create reading-friendly environments through improved libraries, adequate study spaces, and structured reading promotion programs. Lecturers also play a vital role by motivating students and integrating reading tasks into academic assessments.

A strong reading culture is not only essential for academic success but also for producing intellectually sound graduates who can think critically, communicate effectively, and contribute meaningfully to the development of Kano State and Nigeria at large.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research examined ways of improving reading habits among students in Kano State government–owned tertiary institutions. The study aimed to identify the current state of students' reading habits, investigate factors responsible for poor reading culture, and propose effective strategies to promote reading and academic excellence.

Data were collected from 400 respondents across selected state-owned universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in Kano State through structured interviews and questionnaires. Respondents included students, lecturers, and librarians. Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Improvement of Library Facilities:
   The state government should allocate more funds to refurbish libraries in tertiary institutions. Modern books, journals, digital resources, and conducive reading spaces should be provided.

2. Integration of Reading Programs into the Curriculum:
   Reading-related activities should be incorporated into all courses. Lecturers should assign reading-based tasks and encourage independent research and group reading discussions.

3. Establishment of Reading Clubs and Campaigns:
   Schools should form reading clubs and organize periodic reading competitions, book exhibitions, and literacy awareness campaigns to make reading enjoyable and competitive.

4. Lecturer and Librarian Involvement:
   Lecturers and librarians should collaborate to guide students in book selection, research methods, and information literacy. Librarians should also run reading orientation programs for new students.

5. Regulation of Social Media Usage:
   Students should be sensitized on the negative effects of excessive social media use on their academic performance. Institutions can organize digital literacy workshops on balancing technology with study habits.

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