

INFLUENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND ON ACCESS TO E-READING RESOURCES AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONUEKE EDUCATION ZONE, EBONYI STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated influence of socioeconomic background on access to e-reading resources among public secondary school students in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state. The study adopted descriptive research design. A sample of 336 students was drawn from the target population of 2117 senior secondary students of the sixty five (65) secondary schools in Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi state using proportionate stratified sampling technique. The study collected data using questionnaire “Influence of Socioeconomic Background on Access to E-reading Resources among Public Secondary School Students in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state Questionnaire” (ISBAER) structured by the researcher.. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Research questions were answered using the arithmetic mean while the standard deviation was used to determine the proximity of the respondents’ responses. The hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Real limit of numbers 0.00-1.49 (Very Low Extent), 1.50-2.49 (Low Extent), 2.50-3.49 (High Extent), 3.50-4.00 (Very High Extent) were used to interpret the results of the research questions. A null hypothesis was rejected for any test statistic with p-values less than a 0.05 level of significance. On the other hand, a null hypothesis was accepted for any test statistic with P-values greater than a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that parent level of education, level of income and parent occupation influence students’ access to e-reading resources at high extent. The study recommended among others that parents should be sensitized on the benefits of e-reading to students academic performance

KEYWORDS: Socioeconomic Background, E-Reading Resources Onueke Education Zone.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing development in digital technology in recent years has occasioned a paradigm shift in the education sector by creating new opportunities for better learning experiences. It has transformed how education is delivered and accessed across the globe. Prominent among these innovations, is electronic reading which has revolutionized how students interact with books and learning resources. Electronic reading popularly known as e-reading involves accessing educational content through digital platforms such as e-books, PDF materials, websites, online libraries, and e-learning applications (Afzal, Khan, Daud., Ahmad & Butt, 2023). Electronic reading is defined as the practice of reading books, newspapers, and other

texts in a digital format on portable electronic devices like e-readers, tablets, and smart phones (Alzubi, 2023). It occurs when individuals read books in a digital format instead of the older style printed format. It is all about reading books and newspapers on a portable device such as an e-book reader, tablet or smartphone.

E-reading resources in education encompass a wide array of technological tools, online platforms, and digital content utilized to facilitate and enhance the learning process (Aljawarneh, 2020). These resources include but not limited to educational websites, interactive software, multimedia presentations, online libraries, virtual laboratories, and learning management systems. Unlike traditional print books, e-books are available in digital form and offer advantages such as portability (carrying a whole library on one device), customizable text (font size and style) and features like text searching, highlighting, and note-taking. They serve as invaluable supplements to traditional teaching methods, offering dynamic and diverse ways to impart knowledge, encourage engagement, and foster skill development among learners (Serajuddin, 2023). In contemporary educational landscapes, the significance of e-reading resources cannot be overstated. They provide accessibility, flexibility, and scalability in delivering educational content across various subjects and levels of learning (Gordon, 2014). Through interactive simulations, virtual classrooms, and personalized learning modules, digital resources cater to diverse learning styles, accommodating individual pacing and preferences. Additionally, they often promote collaboration among students and enable educators to tailor instruction to meet specific learning needs, thus enriching the educational experience (Palanivel, 2020).

Moreover, digital resources play a pivotal role in preparing learners for the demands of a rapidly evolving, technology-driven society (Alzubi, 2023). They facilitate the acquisition of digital literacy skills, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and information fluency, which are crucial competencies for success in the modern workforce. With e-reading resources, learners are provided with a series of information and interactive learning resources. It enhances simple text searching; every document is available to everyone, everywhere. E reading resource retrieval is speedier than print resource retrieval. By giving a link, the users can be directed to the document. Any type of media may be included in the collection that is accessible online. Embracing digital tools in education equips students with the proficiencies necessary to navigate an increasingly interconnected global environment, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and adaptability (Bennett & McWhorter, 2021). Despite the enormous potentials of e-reading resources to students' academic performance and overall development, there is inequitable access to these digital resources; hence, such benefits are not uniformly distributed among learners. Some learners have digital devices and enjoy access to e-reading resources whereas others do not have those resources and have limited access to e-reading material. Some of the factors that may account for this include: socioeconomic background, cultural belief, poor power supply among others. Socioeconomic background is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various indicators such as parental income, education level, and occupation. These components serve as proxies for the social and economic resources available to individuals and families, influencing their access to opportunities and quality of life (Hoff, 2013). Parental income reflects the financial resources available to support children's development, including access to educational materials, enrichment activities, and healthcare services. Secondly, education level is another key determinant of socioeconomic, shaping parents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to child-rearing practices and educational support. Occupation, reflecting the type of work parents engage in, also influences child's language development. Occupations vary in terms of job stability, income, and opportunities for career advancement, which in turn affect the resources available to support children's learning and development (Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). In Nigeria, particularly in Ebonyi

State, the adoption of e-reading in secondary schools has gradually increased, influenced by the availability of digital devices, internet connectivity, power supply, students' economic capabilities and socioeconomic background. Some students tend to have more access to smart phones, laptops, and data subscriptions that support e-reading than others. In contrast, other students often struggle with access to such resources, which in turn affects their academic performance and digital literacy. The problem is pronounced in Onueke Education Ebonyi State, where a significant number of public secondary school students seem to come from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Hence, this study examined investigated how socioeconomic background influence access to e-reading resources among public secondary school students in Onueke Education zone, Ebonyi State.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Despite the growing availability of digital reading materials and e-learning tools, not all students have equal access to these resources. In public secondary schools across Ebonyi State, there is a noticeable digital divide. Some students have personal smartphones or tablets and reliable internet access, while others rely solely on school facilities that are often poorly equipped or unavailable. This unequal access could negatively affect learning outcomes, motivation to read, and digital skills development. Some scholars like Mwangi (2024), Adebayo (2019), Jalal (2024) etc have researched on socioeconomic status (SES) and digital technology. For instance, Mwangi (2024) examined the influence of socioeconomic status on access to technology-enhanced learning in secondary schools in Kenya. The results revealed that there existed important differences in technology access according to the SES of the students. Also, Adebayo (2019) investigated the effect of e-learning tools on the students' academic performance in secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria. The study found that there is positive and significant relationship between the use of e learning tools and students' academic performance. More so, Jalal (2024) examined the relationship between socioeconomic status and access to educational resources among secondary school students in Sri Lanka. The major findings of the study revealed significant variations in access based on parental education levels, with father's education showing notable distinctions. It is import yo note that none of the above studies, to the best of the researcher's knowledge focused on determining how socio3conomic factor influence access to e-reading resources. Therefore, this study investigated influence of socioeconomic background on access to e-reading resources among public secondary school students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the study

1. To what extent does parent level of education influence students' access to e-reading resources
2. To what extent does parent level of income influence students' access to e-reading resources
3. To what extent does parent occupation influence students' access to e-reading resources

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

H01: there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent does parent level of education influence students' access to e-reading resources

H02: there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent does parent level of income influence students' access to e-reading resources

H03: there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent does occupation influence students' access to e-reading resources

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design. A sample of 336 students was drawn from the target population of 2117 senior secondary students of the sixty five (65) secondary schools in Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi state using proportionate stratified sampling technique. The study collected data using questionnaire "Influence of Socioeconomic Background on Access to E-reading Resources among Public Secondary School Students in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state Questionnaire" (ISBAER) structured by the researcher. The reliability of the instrument was determined by subjecting it to a trial testing using 20 students from public secondary school Abakaliki Education zone which was not part of the area of study. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach alpha approach in statistical package for social science (SPSS) which generated the coefficient index of 0.74. The instrument was administered to the respondents with the help of two research assistants who were graduates of English Education, considered to have good knowledge of the area of study as well as requisite skills and ideas needed for the administration of the questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Research questions were answered using the arithmetic mean while the standard deviation was used to determine the proximity of the respondents' responses. The hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Real limit of numbers 0.00-1.49 (Very Low Extent), 1.50-2.49 (Low Extent), 2.50-3.49 (High Extent), 3.50-4.00 (Very High Extent) were used to interpret the results of the research questions. A null hypothesis was rejected for any test statistic with p-values less than a 0.05 level of significance. On the other hand, a null hypothesis was accepted for any test statistic with P-values greater than a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

To what extent does parent level of education influence students’ access to e-reading resources in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state

The result of the data analysis was presented in Tables 1

Tables 1: Mean ratings and SD of the respondents on Extent Parent Level of Education Influence Students’ Access to E-reading Resources in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	My parents are educated enough to support my use of e-reading tools	2.96	0.78	High Extent
2.	My parents encourage my use of reading using digital devices because of their level of education	3.05	0.94	High Extent
3.	I receive help from my parents e-reading app	3.02	0.85	High Extent
4.	My parents subscribe to online learning platforms for me because of level of education	2.95	0.71	High Extent
5.	My parents do not encourage to use e-reading resources of their illiteracy	2.77	0.63	High Extent
Grand mean		2.95	0.78	High Extent

X = Mean SD = Stand Deviation

The results in Table 1 show that the respondents agreed to all items in the cluster. The grand mean of 2.95 indicates that parent level of education influences students’ access to e-reading resources in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state at high extent.

H01: there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent parent level of education influence students’ access to e-reading resources

The null hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: T-test Analysis of the Responses on extent parent level of education influence students’ access to e-reading resources

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Decision
Male	140	68.98	14.95	334	0.95	0.35	NS
Female	196	67.48	13.44				

\bar{x} = mean of respondents, *SD* = Standard deviation, **S** = Significant, **NS** = Not Significant.

The results in Table 2 show that the t-calculated value of 0.95 is not significant at the P-value of 0.35 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the p- value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent parent level of education influence students’ access to e-reading resources.

Research Question 2

To what extent does parent level of income influence students’ access to e-reading resources

The result of the data analysis was presented in Tables 3

Tables 3: Mean ratings and SD of the respondents on Extent Parent level of income Influence Students’ Access to E-reading Resources in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
6.	My parents can afford digital reading devices like phones, tablets and laptop	2.88	1.04	High Extent
7.	I have access to internet at home because of parents income level	2.71	0.97	High Extent
8.	I own personal e-reading tools because of my parents level of income	2.99	0.81	High Extent
9.	My parents subscribe to online learning platforms for me	2.58	1.13	High Extent
10.	I have no access to digital library because my parents cannot afford to subscribe for me	2.83	1.14	High Extent
Grand mean		2.79	1.01	High Extent

X = Mean **SD** = Stand Deviation

The results in Table 3 show that the respondents agreed to all items in the cluster. The grand mean of 2.95 indicates that parent level of income influences students’ access to e-reading resources in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state at high extent.

H02: there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent does parent level of income influence students’ access to e-reading resources

The null hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance and presented in Table 4.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of the Responses on extent parent level of income influence students’ access to e-reading resources

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Decision
Male	140	62.91	12.08	334	2.88	0.30	NS
Female	196	66.97	12.79				

\bar{x} = mean of respondents, *SD* = Standard deviation, *S* = Significant, *NS* = Not Significant.

The results in Table 4 show that the t-calculated value of 2.88 is not significant at the P-value of 0.30 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the p- value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent parent level of income influence students’ access to e-reading resources.

Research Question 3

To what extent does parent occupation influence students’ access to e-reading resources

The result of the data analysis was presented in Tables 5

Tables 5: Mean ratings and SD of the respondents on Extent Parent occupation Influence Students’ Access to E-reading Resources in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
11.	My parents job gives them time to support my digital learning	2.80	1.10	High Extent
12.	My parents job involves digital tools that they also encourage me to use	2.88	0.99	High Extent
13.	The nature of parents work influences my access to e-reading resources	2.85	1.17	High Extent
14.	My parents occupation allows them to buy educational software and gadgets	2.57	1.32	High Extent
15.	I access e-reading resources in my parents’ place of work.	2.62	1.40	High Extent
Grand mean		2.74	1.19	High Extent

X = Mean **SD** = Stand Deviation

The results in Table 5 show that the respondents agreed to all items in the cluster. The grand mean of 2.95 indicates that parent occupation influences students’ access to e-reading resources in Onueke Education Zone, Ebonyi state at high extent.

H03: there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent does parent occupation influence students’ access to e-reading resources

The null hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance and presented in Table 6.

Table 6: T-test Analysis of the Responses on extent parent occupation influence students' access to e-reading resources

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Decision
Male	140	67.18	9.84	334	3.15	0.085	NS
Female	196	62.41	14.23				

\bar{x} = mean of respondents, *SD* = Standard deviation, *S* = Significant, *NS* = Not Significant.

The results in Table 6 show that the t-calculated value of 3.15 is not significant at the P-value of 0.085 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significance between the mean rating of male and female on extent parent's occupation influence students' access to e-reading resources.

DISCUSSION

The results in Table 1 revealed that in the opinion of the respondents, parent level of education influences students' access to e-reading resources at high extent. Specifically, it showed that most of the respondents agreed that their parents were educated enough to support their use of e-reading tools, encourage their use of reading using digital devices because of their level of education, receive help from their parents e-reading app, subscribe to online learning platforms for their because of level of education, and some parents do not encourage to use e-reading resources of their illiteracy. This result is in with the finding of Mwangi (2024) which showed that that there existed important differences in technology access according to the SES of the students.

The results in Table 3 showed that the majority respondents agreed parent level of income influences students' access to e-reading resources at high extent. This is in consonance with the findings of Jalal (2024) who revealed significant variations in access based on parental education levels and income, with father's education showing notable distinctions. The results in Table 5 show that the majority of respondents agreed that parent occupation influences students' access to e-reading resources at high extent. This means the nature of the work parent do can determine their children's access to e-reading; children whose parents are engaged in ICT related job may have more access to e-reading resources and vice versa. This is in agreement with

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that parent level of education, level of income and occupation greatly affect students' access to e-reading resources at high extent. This implies that student from high socioeconomic background where parents are well educated, have good source of income and engaged in ICT related jobs may have more access to digital ore-reading resources than those from poor or low socioeconomic background.

RECOMMENDATION

- Parents should be sensitized on the benefits of e-reading to students' academic performance.

- The government and school owners should provide e-reading resources to schools and make it accessible to all students.
- The school authority should encourage students to make use of e-reading resources for improved academic performance.

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