Exploring the Causes of Declining Reading Culture Among Undergraduates: Evidence from BOUESTI

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Abstract: This study was carried out to analyze academics' perceptions of technological, institutional, and socioeconomic factors that influence poor reading culture amongst undergraduates in BOUESTI. The survey research design was adopted for this study with a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The population of the study comprises core academia working in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere- Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to select ninety-seven lecturers (97) for the study. Excessive reliance on technology, the widespread use of social media, which distracts students, and spending too much time on the phone were identified as technological factors influencing poor reading culture among undergraduates in BOUESTI. Also, socioeconomic factors such as the government's inadequate budgetary attention to Education and insufficient funds for university libraries. Recommendations were made in line with findings that government policies on Education should be effectively implemented, book production should be subsidized, and Introduction of reading competitions among colleges with motivating prices, among others.

1. Introduction

Reading culture is a foundational element of both academic and personal growth that encourages critical thinking and lifelong learning. However, the fall in undergraduate reading culture has drawn attention from all over the world, especially in areas where socioeconomic, institutional, and technical variables have a big influence on students' habits and views. The way that students access and interact with information has changed as a result of the incorporation of technology into the classroom. Digital platforms provide difficulties even while they provide previously unheard-of convenience. Students' concentration on

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academic reading is frequently weakened by the distractions that social media and leisure apps provide. According to Cremina and Scholes [1], a preference for digital content frequently takes precedence over conventional reading practices, which results in a decline in comprehension abilities and poorer academic achievement. Further undermining students' motivation to read critically is the association between excessive screen time and cognitive overload [2].

Institutions of higher learning are essential to fostering a culture of reading. However, attempts to encourage long-term reading habits are hampered by a lack of institutional support and insufficient library resources. According to Michailidis [3], students are frequently deterred from improving their reading skills by university libraries' restricted selection of interesting and varied reading materials. Additionally, instructional strategies that place more emphasis on memorization than on critical interaction with texts lead to a decrease in students' excitement for reading [4].

Undergraduates' bad reading habits are made worse by socioeconomic inequalities. Low-income students frequently encounter obstacles like restricted book access, inadequate internet infrastructure, and budgetary limitations that limit their chances for academic success. According to Makundi [5], socioeconomic circumstances have a big impact on students' capacity to get the resources they need, which in turn affects their reading preferences and academic performance. Furthermore, this problem is sustained by cultural views that minimize reading as a means of empowerment [6].

A multifaceted approach involving stakeholders like educators, legislators, and students is needed to address the decline in reading culture. Fostering a culture of reading requires reducing socioeconomic gaps, enhancing institutional support, and promoting digital literacy. This study intends to offer practical insights for reversing the trend of declining student reading habits by analyzing the interactions of these elements.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Our generation of youths, as reiterated, is risking the future educational growth and development of our dear country by their refusal to imbibe the reading culture. Reading has become an endangered species in Nigeria, consequent to the preference for the new media of communication over printed books by most people. The concern of this study, therefore, is to examine the technological, institutional, and socioeconomic factors that influence poor reading culture among the undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Does technology influence poor reading culture? If yes, in what ways among these undergraduates? What are the institutional and socioeconomic factors that are influencing poor reading culture? If they are, then what are the strategies to be adopted to bring back the required reading culture among these students? These are the fundamental questions that this study seeks to answer by exploring the analysis of technological, institutional, and socioeconomic factors that influence poor reading culture among undergraduates in BOUESTI, Nigeria.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Ascertain academics' perceptions of the technological factors that influence poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.
- Determine academics' perception of the institutional factors influencing poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.
- Establish academics' perception of the socioeconomic factors that influence poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.
- Determine strategies to adopt to improve reading culture among undergraduate students.

2. Review of Literature

Understanding undergraduates' bad reading habits necessitates a multifaceted approach that takes into account institutional, socioeconomic, and technological variables. A habitual, ongoing engagement with texts for learning, amusement, or personal development is known as reading culture [7]. Systemic problems that limit students' capacity or desire to interact with academic texts are frequently blamed for declining reading habits [8]. Students' interactions with knowledge have changed as a result of technological improvements. Distractions are introduced by digital resources, even when they improve accessibility. Undergraduates' attention to academic reading is greatly impacted by the widespread use of social media, streaming services, and gaming platforms. According to Braten and Braasch [9], students frequently put their leisure time ahead of their academic goals, which results in a loss in their critical reading abilities. Similarly, more screen usage shortens attention spans and comprehension, according to Cardoso-Leite et al. [10].

Technology makes reading materials more accessible to all, but it also leads to information overload. Because there is so much literature available online, students may be discouraged from reading in-depth and instead turn to skimming and rapid searches [11]. A lack of digital literacy makes the problem worse. According to Ugwu and Orsu [12], students are less likely to participate in meaningful reading activities if they are unable to use online academic resources efficiently. Institutions must close this gap by offering assistance and training.

To promote a culture of reading, educational institutions are essential, but systemic issues frequently constrain their efficacy. The quantity and calibre of library resources available greatly influence students' reading habits. According to Mesagan and Ibrahim [13], underequipped libraries discourage frequent use by failing to satisfy students' academic needs. Higher levels of involvement are reported by institutions with diversified and contemporary collections [14]. Students' enthusiasm in reading for comprehension is weakened by rote learning and exam-focused instructional strategies. Active learning techniques, such as including book discussions and critical analysis in courses, are more successful in fostering a reading culture, according to Loh et al. [15]. Reading clubs and academic mentorship are examples of supportive settings that might encourage pupils to read. [16] pointed out that many colleges do not have these kinds of programs and instead concentrate on other academic indicators.

Reading habits are greatly influenced by socioeconomic factors, such as family background and financial capability. The intellectual potential of undergraduates from low-income families is sometimes limited since they are unable to purchase books or digital resources [17]. Although libraries are supposed to close this gap, institutional shortcomings frequently prevent them from meeting the demands of students. Students' reading habits are greatly influenced by family attitudes on schooling. Students from literate homes are more likely to acquire great reading abilities [18]. On the other hand, pupils from low-income families frequently don't have access to literature. Reading is underappreciated in many cultures when compared to other activities. According to Maab et al. [19], pupils are discouraged from devoting time to reading since it is viewed as non-essential by society's emphasis on short-term financial advantages.

A key component of academic success is reading culture. There are significant ramifications when undergraduates lack a healthy reading culture. Poor reading habits can make it difficult for students to understand difficult ideas, which lowers their academic achievement. According to Yaqoob [20], undergraduates who read academic books seldom frequently struggle to use critical thinking abilities, which are crucial for coursework and exams. In a similar vein, [21] discovered a clear link between students' reading habits and their GPA. Reading infrequently has a detrimental impact on comprehension and vocabulary development. Undergraduates who seldom read frequently lack the language skills necessary for clear communication and academic writing, which further impedes their effectiveness in research and presentations, according to Agyei [22]. Reading improves memory retention by promoting cognitive processes. According to Anyira and Udem [23], students who do not read regularly have trouble remembering what they have learned, which makes it hard for them to successfully expand on what they have already learned.

3. Methods

The descriptive design was adopted for this study, which has its scope limited to academics in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to select ninety-seven (97) lecturers for the study. The instrument used for data collection was divided into four (4) parts, with a total of forty items. The sections were based on the objectives of the study. The instrument was designed using a 4-point rating scale of SA = Strongly Agree (4); A = Agree (3); D = Disagree (2) and SD = Strongly Disagree (1). The generated data was analysed using descriptive techniques such as frequency and percentage.

3.1. Presentation of Data and Findings

Research Question 1: What is the perception of academics on the technological factors that influence poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.

Table 1: Analysis of technological factors affecting student behavior and learning engagement

Identified Technological Factors	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
Excessive reliance on technology	58(59.8%)	33(34%)	0(0%)	6(6.2%)	3.48	A
The widespread use of social media, which distracts students	58(59.8%)	33(34%)	0(0%)	6(6.2%)	3.48	A
Spending too much time on the phone	58(3.1%)	33(3.1%)	2(3.1%)	4(3.1%)	3.48	A
The availability and proliferation of smartphones	39(40.2%)	48(49.4%)	7(7.2%)	3(3.1%)	3.27	A

Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms dominating the impact	45(3.1%)	31(3.1%)	17(3.1%)	4(3.1%)	3.21	A
The prevailing chatting culture among youths	48(49.6%)	34(35.1%)	1(1.1%)	14(14.4%)	3.20	A
Inadequate home reading technological resources	40(41.2%)	34(35.1%)	16(16.5%)	7(7.2%)	3.10	A
Spending too much time watching television shows like Africa Magic ZeeWorld and BB9ja	30(30.9%)	52(53.6%)	5(5.6%)	10(10.3%)	3.05	R
An over-reliance on laptops, desktops, etc.	30(30.9%)	52(53.6%)	5(5.6%)	10(10.3%)	3.05	R
Excessive reliance on audio-visual materials (such as MP3, live theatre productions, etc.)	31(31.9%)	41(3.1%)	14(14.4%)	11(11.3%)	2.95	R

Significant Mean = 3.10

Table 1 shows the technological factors influencing poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, at a mean significant standing of 3.10. It was discovered that excessive reliance on technology, the widespread use of social media, which distracts students, and spending too much time on the phone are the major technological factors influencing poor reading culture (x=3.48) for each; these were followed by the availability and proliferation of smartphones (x=3.27). Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms dominating impact (x=3.21), the prevailing chatting culture among youths (x=3.20), and inadequate home reading technological resources (x=3.10), respectively, were also seen to be having an influence on the poor reading culture among students.

Other technological factors were insignificant because their mean values were less than the significant mean value of 3.10. The technological factors were Spending too much time watching television shows like Africa Magic ZeeWorld and BB9ja (x=3.05), an over-reliance on laptops, desktops, etc. (x=2.96) and an excessive reliance on audio-visual materials (such as MP3, live theatre productions, etc (x=2.95).

Research Question 2: What is the perception of academics on the institutional factors that influence poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.

Table 2: Assessment of institutional factors influencing students' academic performance and engagement

Identified Institutional Factors	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
The government's inadequate budgetary attention to Education	45 (46.4%)	31 (32%)	13 (13.4%)	8 (8.2%)	3.21	A
Insufficient funds for university libraries	25(25.8%)	58(59.8%)	9(9.3%)	5(5.2%)	3.05	A
Ineffective implementations of educational policies on the part of the government	40(41.2%)	33(34.0%)	11(11.3%)	13(13.4%)	3.03	A
Ineffective public and academic libraries	29(29.9%)	45(46.4%)	19(19.6%)	4(4.1%)	3.02	A
Lack of motivation	41(42.3%)	34(35.1%)	3(3.1)	19(19.6%)	3.01	A
Busy academic schedule	33(34.0%)	45(36.4%)	4(4.1%)	16(16.5%)	3.00	A
Absence of recreational amenities	19(19.6%)	54(55.7%)	18(18.6%)	6(6.2%)	2.89	A
Poor library services	6(3.1%)	54(3.1%)	18(3.1%)	19(3.1%)	2.49	R
Public libraries' exclusive placement in urban regions at the expense of rural ones	8(8.2%)	49(50.5%)	22(22.7%)	18(18.6%)	2.49	R
Improper reading atmosphere	3(3.1%)	41(42.3%)	13(13.4)	40(41.2%)	2.07	R

Significant Mean = 2.82

Table 2 shows the institutional factors that influence poor reading culture. At a significant mean value of 2.82, different institutional factors were identified. These factors include the government's inadequate budgetary attention to Education (x=3.21), insufficient funds for university libraries (x=3.05), and ineffective implementations of educational policies on the part of the government (x=3.03). Others with significant mean values are ineffective public and academic libraries (x=3.02), lack of motivation (x=3.01), busy academic schedule (x=3.00), and absence of recreational amenities (x=2.89). Meanwhile, other institutional factors influencing poor reading culture were at an insignificant level because their significant mean value was below the significant mean value of 2.82. These factors are poor library services (x=2.49), Public libraries' exclusive placement in urban regions at the expense of rural ones (x=2.49), and improper reading atmosphere (x=2.07).

Research Question 3: What is the perception of academics on the socioeconomic factors that influence poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.

Table 3: Evaluation of socioeconomic factors affecting students' reading culture and academic engagement

Identified Socioeconomic Factors	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
A weak reading foundation at home	37(38.1%)	26(26.8%)	15(15.5%)	19(19.6%)	3.21	A
The employment status of the parents	43(44.3%)	35(36.1%)	13(13.4%)	6(6.2%)	3.19	A
The willingness of the parents to pay for reading materials	19(19.6%)	33(34.0%)	22(22.6%)	23(23.7%)	3.03	A
The reading habits of parents	34(35.1%)	32(32.9%)	10(10.3%)	21(21.6%)	3.02	A
The absence of home libraries or books for reading at home	25(25.8%)	37(38.1%)	19(19.5%)	16(16.5%)	3.01	A
The absence of reading materials in residence halls for students	30(30.9%)	35(36.1%)	15(15.5%)	17(17.1%)	3.01	A
The literacy level and background of the parents	38(39.2%)	29(29.8%)	14(14.4%)	16(16.3%)	2.93	A
The dominating impact of DSTV shows	32(33%)	15(15.5%)	41(42.3%)	9(9.3%)	2.89	R
Peer group distracting influence	30(30.9%)	36(27.1%)	16(16.5%)	15(15.5%)	2.85	R
Ignorance of parenting responsibilities	28(28.9%)	36(37.1%)	15(15.5%)	18(18.6%)	2.76	R

Significant Mean = 2.92

Table 3 shows the socioeconomic factors that influence poor reading culture. At a significant mean value of 2.92, the following socioeconomic factors were identified: a weak reading foundation at home (x=3.21), the employment status of the parents (x=319), the willingness of the parents to pay for reading materials (x=3.03) and the reading habits of parents (x=3.02). Others are the absence of home libraries or books for reading at home and the absence of reading materials in residence halls for students standing at (x=3.01) while the literacy level and background of the parents (x=2.93). Other non-significant socioeconomic factors were the dominating impact of DSTV shows (x=2.89), peer group distracting influence (x=2.85), and ignorance of parenting responsibilities (x=2.76).

Research Question 4: What are the strategies that can be adopted to improve reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.

Table 4: Evaluation of strategies for enhancing students' reading culture

Strategies for Improved Reading Culture	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
Effective implementation of educational policies	43(44.3%)	35(36.1%)	13(13.4%)	6(6.2%)	3.19	A
Subsidizing book production	40(41.2%)	34(35.1%)	16(16.5%)	7(7.2%)	3.10	A
Introduction of reading competitions among colleges with motivating prices	30(30.9%)	52(53.6%)	5(5.6%)	10(10.3%)	3.05	A
Given students assignments that will compel them to visit the library	24(24.7%)	57(58.8%)	11(11.3%)	5(5.2%)	3.04	A
Provision of a conducive environment for private reading in the library	19(19.6%)	33(34.0%)	22(22.6%)	23(23.7%)	3.03	A
Library identifying and rewards the best user of the library on a semester basis	29(29.9%)	45(46.4%)	19(19.6%)	4(4.1%)	3.02	A
Parents should set an example at home	25(25.8%)	37(38.1%)	19(19.5%)	16(16.5%)	3.01	A
Relaxing some of the rules of the libraries	33(34.0%)	45(36.4%)	4(4.1%)	16(16.5%)	3.00	R
Introduction of compulsory library tours on a departmental basis	38(39.2%)	29(29.8%)	14(14.4%)	16(16.3%)	2.93	R
Meeting the right requirements for the establishment of school libraries for an adequate foundation	19(19.6%)	54(55.7%)	18(18.6%)	6(6.2%)	2.89	R

Significant Mean = 3.01

Table 4 shows the strategies that can be adopted to improve reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti. At a significant mean value of 3.01, the identified factors were effective implementation of educational policies (x=3.19), subsidizing book production (x=3.10), Introduction of reading competitions among colleges with motivating prices (x=3.05), giving students assignments that will compel them to visit the library (x=3.04), provision of a conducive environment for private reading in the library (x=3.03), library identifying

and rewards the best user of the library on a semester basis (x=3.02). Parents should set an example from home (x=3.01). The other three were at insignificant levels because their mean values were less than the significant mean value of 3.01. The concerned strategies were relaxing some of the rules of the libraries (x=3.00), introducing compulsory library tours on a departmental basis (x=2.93), and meeting the right requirements for the establishment of school libraries for an adequate foundation (x=2.89).

4. Discussion of Findings

Technological Factors: findings show that the following are the major technological factors influencing poor reading culture among undergraduate students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti: the excessive reliance on technology, the widespread use of social media, which distracts students, spending too much time on the phone were the most factors that constituted to the prevailing poor reading culture among these undergraduates. This agreed with the findings from the research of [24]; [25]. Other influencing poor reading culture factors were the availability and proliferation of smartphones, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms dominating impact [24]; [26]. Others are the prevailing chatting culture among youths and inadequate home reading technological resources. This is in agreement with [27] that the decline in reading culture is an offshoot of technological advancement that has brought about overall changes in family, social, and economic conditions.

Institutional Factors: Findings indicate the institutional factors that influence poor reading culture to be the government's inadequate budgetary attention to Education and insufficient funds for university libraries. All these agreed with the findings of [27]-[29] that poor funding of Education will affect so many organs of the system. Other influencing and significant factors were ineffective implementations of educational policies on the part of the government, ineffective public and academic libraries, and lack of motivation [27]-[29] and [30]. The findings in their studies were in tandem with this result. It was equally revealed that a busy academic schedule and absence of recreational amenities are factors that contribute to poor reading culture among undergraduates. This agreed with the revelations of [25]; [29] and [31] in their studies. It is disheartening that the government still neglects to prioritize Education as a key component despite the central place they occupy in the national development.

Social-Economic factors: Findings revealed the following social-economic factors that contributed to the poor reading culture of undergraduates in BOUESTI. A weak reading foundation at home, the employment status of the parents and the willingness of the parents to pay for reading materials. This agreed with the findings of [27] and [32], who identified a weak reading foundation as one of the several factors responsible for the increasing drop in the reading culture among Nigerians. Other socioeconomic factors are the reading habits of the parents, the absence of home libraries or books for reading at home, the absence of reading material in the residence halls for the students, and the literacy/ background of the parents. This supports [33]-[35] that a week of reading at home is the root cause of the fall in reading culture.

Strategies for improving reading culture: Strategies for improving reading culture show the effective implementation of educational policies, subsidizing book production, and Introduction of reading competitions among colleges with motivating prices. This agreed with the finding of the research conducted by Adejimoh et al., [36] when they noted that reading clubs/groups should be encouraged as an approach to tackling poor reading culture. Other strategies agreed to in this study are giving students assignments that will compel them to visit the library, providing a conducive environment for private reading in the library, identifying and rewarding the best user of the library on a semester basis, and parents setting an example from home. This was in tandem with the findings of [15], and When they submitted that the library should be at the centre of formulating strategies for improvement in reading culture.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found that Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, undergraduate students' poor reading habits are influenced by technological and socioeconomic factors. It was found that the majority of the factors contributing to the prevalent poor reading culture among these undergraduates were excessive reliance on technology, the widespread use of social media, which distracts students, and spending too much time on the phone. Also, the government's inadequate budgetary attention to Education and insufficient funds for university libraries contribute significantly to a poor reading culture. The study further provided empirical pieces of evidence on a weak reading foundation at home, the employment status of the parents and the willingness of the parents to pay for reading materials, which led to a decline in reading culture. Without a doubt, it is worthwhile to draw the conclusion that there are several different factors that contribute to Nigeria's poor reading culture. Because of the findings, the study recommends that government policies on Education should be effectively implemented, book production should be subsidized, and the Introduction of reading competitions among colleges with motivating prices, among others.

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