

Effect of Literature in the School Library on the Social Development of Children

By

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Abstract

Purpose: *The study examined the effect of literature in the school library on the social development of children.*

Research Design: *Quasi experimental design was adopted for the study. It was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The population of the study was 28,172 pupils from the 326 private primary schools in Orerokpe educational zone of Delta State. Sixty-three primary four pupils formed the sample. Purposive and cluster sampling techniques were used to sample 32 pupils in the experimental group one and thirty-one (31) in the experimental group two (control group). Cluster sampling technique was further employed to draw out the two intact classes for the experiment. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.*

Findings: *Findings show that: exposure to literature is significantly effective in the improvement of morality of children and significantly effective in the improvement of children's ability to exercise self-control.*

Originality/Value: *Since this line of study has not been conducted in the zone, its existence stands a valuable contribution to knowledge.*

Implication: *The implication of the study is that schools should emphasize on morality and self-control of the students when recommending literature texts for the students. This will help to eradicate vices like fighting, examination malpractice, stealing etc, from the school system and give the students the skills and strategies they need to control their impulses.*

Key Words: Literature, Children's literature, school library, social development, morality, self-control **Study type:** Empirical.

Introduction

Literature is creative work which can be described as written material, usually characterized by excellence of style and expression and by themes of general interest. It can come in form of prose, drama, essays, poetry, folklore etc. Literature has three major functions in the lives of readers, which are; to educate, to instruct and to entertain. Literature is important for many reasons, which include the ability to provide pleasure to readers, to

help build experience, to help readers empathize with others and to develop thinking skills. As a result, literature has the potential of instilling lifelong values in children. Exposing children to literature early is of great importance because at this stage they are still malleable and easily impacted. Akanwa (2013) corroborated this in her assertion that literature has its place in the education process of the child that no other media can take. Similarly, Hade (2007) avers that we think in stories, and

they are incredibly powerful in the lives of all humans, especially children.

Children's literature refers to the type of literature that is written specifically for children; it has special appeal to children. According to Akanwa (2013), children's literature is any literature enjoyed by children. It is a very valuable resource which plays a pivotal role in the social development of children as they grow from one stage of life to another. The themes depicted in children's literature books are intended to affect their general outlook and their way of life. These children's literature can be made available in the school library.

The school library is a library that is situated in nursery, primary, secondary school or Teachers' Training College (TTC) with the aim of meeting the academic and social needs of pupils, students and staff, through the provision of a wide range of information resources. Anyanwu (2016) avers that a school library is a resource centre found in primary, secondary and TTCs for the purpose of acquiring, organizing, storing and disseminating information materials for the use of teachers and students. It plays a crucial role in the social development of children because it affords them the opportunity of getting exposed to the world of literature. Therefore it is a veritable means of attracting and sustaining children's interest in reading literature books. In addition to providing appropriate library furniture and conducive environment to encourage children to read, the school library should stock relevant and appropriate literature books that will impact the social development of children, since as Ker (2015) states, books intended for children must teach them honesty and should be visionary. They should be books which can make them develop into responsible adults. Development refers to the changes that occur in the life of a human being at different stages of life. Development in children starts as soon as they are born, beginning with physical development to social development which sets in as the

child begins to relate with others. Norton (1999) describes child development as the biological, psychological emotional and even social changes that occur in human beings between birth and adolescence as the individual progresses from dependency to increasing autonomy.

Social development in children refers to the process of growing up in which a child imbibes the societal norms which are necessary to make him a socially acceptable person. Akanwa (2017) opines that social development is all about a child's ability to interact with his peers and adults in a socially acceptable way. Such norms include morality, self-control, and resolution of conflicts, communication, empathy and friendship. This study is specifically on the morality and self-control aspect of social development of the child. While morality has to do with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, self-control is the skill that helps a child to control his or her feelings in order to make good decisions.

Through reading of literature, a child interacts with superior minds and acquires social skills through the various themes portrayed in literature. Children should therefore be encouraged to read them from the earliest stage possible, especially in their formative years. The knowledge acquired at this stage goes a long way to instill values that the child grows up with, both in social, cognitive and emotional development. Children's literature can impact the social development of children in the areas of morality, self-control among others.

Statement of the Problem

Early exposure of children to literature is very beneficial for positive social development in children; therefore literature books should be a priority in school libraries. However, there is general observation that the reading habit of Nigerian children is quite poor. The school library which is supposed to lay the foundation for good reading and library habit for children, unfortunately, does not

exist in most nursery and primary schools in Nigeria. The few that have libraries do not see the need to stock literature books in generous quantity. As a result, children are denied the opportunity of reaping the benefits of being exposed to the world of literature at the early stages of their lives. The question here is what are some of these benefits that accrue from exposing children to literature? The answer to this question is the thrust of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the effect of literature in the school library on children's morality and their ability to exercise self-control.

Research Questions

The following questions were posed:

1. What is the effect of children literature on children's morality as measured by the mean scores of the participants in the control and experimental groups at pre-test and post-test?
2. What is the effect of children literature on children's ability to exercise self-control as measured by the mean scores of the participants in the control and experimental groups at pre-test and post-test?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the effect of literature on children's morality at pre-test and post-test.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the effect of literature on children's ability to exercise self-control at pre-test and post-test.

Literature Review

Literature is a powerful teaching tool and a valued work of art in written form. Ugboma (2007) sees it as a universal means of communicating the emotional, spiritual or intellectual concern of mankind. The

writings are meant to instruct and inform, entertain, express personal joy or pain, reflect religious devotion, glorify a nation or a hero, advocate a particular point of view - whether political, social or aesthetic. It is used to depict real life situations and as a result is not just for reading entertainment. Writers use the medium to expose ills of the society and at the same time to correct them. In other words literature is seen as, a means of communicating the do's and don'ts of a given society and a medium to instruct and educate children. On this note, Almerico (2014) posits that the characters children and young people meet in the pages of a book can have a profound influence on them, almost as strong of an impact as that of real people they know and meet.

Children's literature refers to the type of literature specifically written for the instruction, education and entertainment of children. Fadiman (2017) affirms in his assertion that children's literature is the body of written works accompanied with illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people. The genre encompasses a wide range of works, including acknowledged classics of world literature, picture books and easy-to-read stories written exclusively for children, as well as fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folks songs, mystery, fantasy, science fiction, adventure stories and multiple literary forms (poetry, prose and drama) and other primarily orally transmitted materials. In addition to books, children's literature also includes magazines intended for pre-adult audiences (Net Industries, 2017). They are designed to get the attention of the child, to put in visual and audio expression, the images and thoughts of a child's world, and to keep them well informed about all spheres of life. They are made available for children in the school library.

A school library established for the use of pupils/students and their teachers or instructors to help them achieve the educational goals of the pupils and students.

In addition to providing educational materials, it also has the responsibility of providing a wide range of materials that will impact the lives of children in several ways by building and strengthening their knowledge base. In agreement, Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) opined that school libraries are integral parts of primary and secondary schools with the objectives of providing the instructional materials to enrich the curriculum, to supplement textbooks and classroom instruction and to give students unlimited opportunities for learning. However, according to Ugboma (2007), a school library can also be run by public libraries for each school and class. By this method, a number of books are sent to each class for a duration of one or two weeks, children are encouraged to pick and read from this lot... it is important to note that for a school that cannot have a school library of its own, this method is most welcome, as this effectively takes care of the social developmental need of the children.

Development is a process by which an individual advances, expands or evolves from a lower to a higher state. This advancement, expansion or evolution brings out the potentials and capabilities of an individual and is geared towards a state of completion or perfection. Passer and Smith (2001) maintained that children grow not only physically and mentally, but also socially and emotionally. They form attachments and relationships, and each child displays a unique personality – a distinctive yet somewhat consistent pattern of thinking, feeling and behaving. Children develop in stages and in the process they assimilate values according to the extent of exposure they have the opportunity of benefitting from.

Social development in children refers to the gradual process whereby a child learns to interact with others in an acceptable way as well as how to develop social and emotional skills across his lifespan. This learning starts, from childhood to adulthood, with family members and expands to the larger society. Kids Matter (2017), posited that

social development involves learning the values, knowledge and skills that enable children to relate to others effectively and to contribute in positive ways to family, school, and the community. Healthy social development allows us to form positive relationships with family, friends, teachers, and other people in our lives. As we mature, we learn to better manage our own feelings and needs and to respond appropriately to the feelings and needs of others.

Children, who can control their feelings such as anger or excitement, are more likely to be able to engage in positive play with other children and negotiate difficulties with others when they arise. Equally, children who understand the feelings of others will be in a better position to be sensitive to the needs of other children during play. According to Kid's Count (2016), children's social development is closely related to their emotional development. This kind of learning is passed on to children directly by those who care for and teach them, as well as indirectly through social relationships within the family or with friends, and through children's participation in the culture around them. Literature offers children a medium through which they develop socially.

Social development requires developing language and thinking skills, and understanding the rules necessary for social interaction. Children become social by developing a sense of self after feeling secure in relationships with adults and peers. Literature gives children one vehicle to develop social skills. Children can learn language by reading and listening to stories, and they also can develop socially by reading books that explore social and cultural topics (Grayson, 2017). As early as first grade, a child's social skills are compelling predictors of his future success both in and out of school. Children rely heavily on adults and other caregivers to help them acquire social skills and establish pathways for meaningful learning (Fitzgerald, 2012). Social development can

actually impact many of the other forms of development a child experiences.

Relationship between Literature and Morality

One important attribute that books instill in children is self-discipline. A child learns the habit of sitting for a period of time at a place when absorbed in an interesting story. This attribute will help him to participate in academic exercises in the future, like defenses, seminars and workshops. Almerico (2014) affirmed that good literature with character development themes has the power to develop, shape, and reinforce dispositions essential for instilling in students important core ethical values.

The word 'Morality' refers to man's obligation to duty and conforming with societal norms. Akanwa (2014) asserted that morality involves learning to know the difference between right and wrong which is necessary to make appropriate decisions in life. Children's literature has been used over time to transmit moral values to children through themes that are carefully crafted to give moral lessons. According to Grenby (2017), those who write children's books have always thought it part of their job to instruct their readers, whether in facts, religion, social codes, ways of thinking, or some other set of beliefs or ideas and morality. Teaching children moral values is the process by which you help them develop their moral compasses. The morals children learn as kids will affect how they see the world and behave as adults (Ireland, 2013). Books such as biographies, autobiographies and folktales are major means of teaching children important values like honesty, compassion, gratitude, and more. As teachers and parents will attest, lectures are much less effective than powerful stories and example that show the merits and consequences of the value or trait (Best Children Book, 2017). Ateequ (2017) affirms that children literature helps to inculcate positive, personal, social and moral education. Some children do not have these values, and literature helps to develop them,

as well as foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn and to be good people. He goes on to say that one of the main tools used in an effective programme of character building and character education, both at home and at school, is children's literature and that introduction to children's literature can go a long way in teaching moral education to children. Cyprian Ekwensi's "*The Boa Suitor*" and Anthonia Ekpa's "*Abo and the Crocodile*" are folk stories that can help in a child's moral upbringing (Akanwa, 2014).

Relationship between Literature and Self Control

Babies are born with virtually no self-control. They have little-to-no ability to control their emotional states or behavior. However, the process of developing self-control begins in a baby's earliest months and continues across the first three years and beyond (Zero to Three, 2010). According to Jodi (2014) self-control comes into play as kids are learning to navigate food, substances, anger, stealing, cheating, listening, school behavior and work and children literature plays a great role. Self-control has been defined in many ways... as willpower, self-discipline, or conscientiousness. It is about being able to regulate yourself. It involves resisting distractions, handling your own emotions, inhibiting your impulses and delay gratification and plan ahead.

In the words of Akanwa, a child must learn to exert control over aggressive and hostile behaviour if he is to establish cordial relationships with family members, friends and the larger community. He should not be filled with bitterness and vengeance. According to Kids Health (2017), by learning self-control, children can make appropriate decisions and respond to stressful situations in ways that can yield positive outcomes. Teaching children self-control is designed to give them the skills and strategies they need to control their impulses. Practicing those skills and strategies they need to stop and think before

they act encourages self-control (Goldring, 2012).

Kids Health listed Some children books that teach self-control and they include; *Learn to Listen* by Howard Binkow, *Sometimes I like to Fight but I Don't Do it much anymore* by Lawrence E. Sharpio and *the Child's World of self-control* by Henrietta Gambill. Self-control enables children to cooperate with others, to cope with frustration and to resolve conflicts. We should therefore learn how you can help our infant and child begin to develop this skill that is necessary for success in school and healthy social development (Zero to Three, 2010).

Methodology

The quasi-experimental design is adopted for this study. The design is divided into two phases: pretest and post-test. Pretest refers to when the project kicks off, the time during which the pupils are being set up, but no teamwork has yet been done. This is the period when pupils social development attributes in the rating scale was handed out and collected back. Post-test is, according to estimated project time, when the project is 95% complete (week 8). This period coincides with the end of the programme and is when the study was submitted. The schools selected for the exercise was DSC Model Primary School I and School II Orhuwhorun both in Udu Local Government Area of Delta State. The population consisted of male and female pupils. Primary four pupils were used for the research. In order to get the treatment and control groups, two intact classes were randomly selected from the two schools. Pupils in the experimental group were guided in their use of library while the control group was left in their normal library situation. The researcher went through the literature book collection of the school library that was used for the experimental group. From the assessment of

the researcher, the available books were not adequate, so additional books were provided by the researcher to augment the existing collection. The books were administered on the pupils for a period of 6 (six) weeks. The remaining 2 (two) weeks were used for storytelling. The experimental class, primary 4A in DSC Model Primary School 1, has one period each week for the use of library. The experiment was carried out during the library period. The literature and social development traits are evaluated on four point Likert scales. The pupils were asked to read the books till the end of the period. At the end of each period, those who were able to finish their books will exchange while those who were not able to finish theirs will go home with the books. The literature texts were administered to all the pupils in each group. Lessons learnt were discussed and finally summarized by the librarian.

Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used in testing the null hypotheses whereby the pre-test scores on the students' achievement served as covariates to the post-test scores. The use of ANCOVA statistical tool served as a technique for controlling extraneous variables and experimental contamination of subjects. The decision rule was based on the calculated f-cal against the tabulated f-tab.

Results

Effect of children literature on the morality of children

Research question 1: What is the effect of children literature on children's morality as measured by the mean scores of the participants in the control and experimental groups at pre-test and post-test?

Table 1: Sample Size (n), Mean (\bar{X}), Standard Deviation (S), and ANCOVA F-test statistics

Test: Literature		Pre-test		Post-test	
Group	N	\bar{X}	S	\bar{X}	S
Experimental	32	10.66	2.32	14.81	2.89
Control	31	10.48	1.90	10.84	1.64

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Post-Test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	248.762 ^a	2	124.381	22.017	.000
Intercept	402.897	1	402.897	71.319	.000
PreTest	.116	1	.116	.021	.887
Treatments	248.666	1	248.666	44.018	.000
Error	338.953	60	5.649		
Total	11002.000	63			
Corrected Total	587.714	62			

a. R Squared = .423 (Adjusted R Squared = .404)

It was indicated in Table 1 that at pre-test, the mean scores of the two groups (Experimental and Control) were low at 10.66 and 10.48 respectively, but at post-test, the mean scores of Experimental group increased to 14.81 while that of control was still minimal at 10.84. The increase in the mean score of the experimental group implies that exposure to literature is effective in the improvement of morality of children in primary schools.

It was further indicated in the table that the f-calculated is 44.018 and its sig. value is .000. This significance value is less than

0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and concluding that there is significant difference in the effect of literature on children’s morality as measured by the mean scores of the control and experimental groups at pre-test and post-test.

Effect of children literature on their ability to exercise self-control

Research Question 2: What is the effect of children literature on children’s ability to exercise self-control as measured by the mean scores of the participants in the control and experimental groups at pre-test and post-test?

Table 2: Sample Size (n), Mean (\bar{X}), Standard Deviation (S), and ANCOVA F-test statistics

Test: Literature		Pre-test		Post-test	
Group	N	\bar{X}	S	\bar{X}	S
Experimental	32	10.44	1.92	14.56	3.14
Control	31	10.55	1.59	10.32	1.58

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Post-Test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	290.540 ^a	2	145.270	23.357	.000
Intercept	179.824	1	179.824	28.913	.000

Pre-Test	7.475	1	7.475	1.202	.277
Treatments	285.721	1	285.721	45.939	.000
Error	373.174	60	6.220		
Total	10470.000	63			
Corrected Total	663.714	62			

a. R Squared = .438 (Adjusted R Squared = .419)

It was indicated in Table 2 that at pretest, the mean scores of the two groups (Experimental and Control) were low as 10.44 and 10.55 respectively, but at post-test, the mean scores of Experimental group increased to 14.56 while that of control was still low at 10.32. The increase in the mean score of the experimental group implies that exposure to literature is effective in the improvement of children’s ability to exercise self-control in primary schools.

It was further indicated in the table that the f-calculated is 45.939 and its sig. value is .000. This significance value is less than 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and concluding that there is significant difference in the effect of literature on children’s ability to exercise self-control as measured by the mean scores of the control and experimental groups at pre-test and post-test.

Discussion of the Findings

Effect of children literature on the morality of children

It was revealed in this study that exposure to literature is effective in the improvement of morality of children since the effectiveness was satisfactorily significant. This implies that after exposing children to literature in the library, their morality/moral attitude increased and thus they grow with strong positive moral perception. As a result, children see things from its moral implication more than any other perspective as they grow. Children’s literature is an extremely important piece in the development of the preschool child. Books allow children to learn about the world

around them, increase their imagination, and learn how to respond to different situations

in life. This finding is in line with Almerico’s (2014) affirmation that good literature with character development themes has the power to develop, shape, and reinforce dispositions essential for instilling in children important core ethical values and, Ireland (2013) opinions that children’s literature has been used over time to transmit moral values to children and develop their moral compasses to see the world and behave as adults.

Effect of children literature on their ability to exercise self-control

It was also revealed that exposure to literature is effective in the improvement of children’s ability to exercise self-control, further testing proved it significant. This finding implies that literature affects children’s ability to exercise self-control. That is, relevant exposure to literature will always enhance the children’s ability to exercise self-control as they grow up. In agreement with this finding, Kids Health (2017) indicated that by learning self-control through literature, children can make appropriate decisions and respond to stressful situations in ways that can yield positive outcomes. Teaching children self-control is designed to give them the skills and strategies they need to control their impulses. Practicing those skills and strategies they need in order to stop and think before they act entails that children need to control their impulses (Goldring, 2012). The finding proved that the ability to exercise self-control is significantly enhanced through exposure to literature.

Conclusion

Children's literature is an extremely important piece in the development of a preschool child. It allows children to learn about the world around them, use their imagination, and learn how to respond to different situations in life. Findings of the study show that exposure to literature is significantly effective in the improvement of morality and children's ability to exercise self-control. This implies that moral standing of children will be enhanced and evil practices like fighting, examination malpractice, stealing etc. will be eradicated. They will also be able to resolve difficult and challenging issues in their everyday life instead of resorting to aggressiveness or apathy towards their teachers, family members and peers.

Recommendations

The researcher has the following recommendations to make based on the findings of this study.

1. Schools libraries should stock substantial number of literature books portraying the themes of morality because. This will help the children to grow into reasonable adults who can uphold good moral standard.
2. Books that deal with emotions should also be introduced to the library to help children to control themselves and also relate with others in a socially acceptable manner that is devoid of aggression. This is how children in Nigeria should be groomed in this period of youth restiveness and militancy.

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