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## Reading Culture and Its Effect on Students' Academic Performance: A Comparative Study

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**Abstract**

This study examined the influence of reading behaviour among students in two (2) Junior High Schools in Ghana: Asantekwaa Seventh - Day Adventist (S.D.A) JHS in the Bono East Region and Valley View University (VUU) JHS in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana. The study employed a cross-sectional design approach; with copies of a structured questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. Both the stratified and random sampling techniques were used. The quantitative data was analysed descriptively (frequency and percentages) with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20). The results revealed that students from Asantekwaa S.D.A JHS lacked interest in reading while their counterparts from VUU JHS indicated a lack of access to local novels/storybooks. However, the majority of the respondents from both schools admitted that they read daily. It is recommended that parents should provide reading materials to their children; schools should establish libraries for students to have access to relevant reading materials. The findings of this study will provide knowledge and measures on how to improve reading habits among students.

**Keywords:** academic performance, influence, reading culture

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## Introduction

Reading is perceived to be the key to human development and personal advancement in a world that changes daily. It contributes largely to the growth and development of the psychological, cultural, educational, as well as emotional aspects of an individual's life. It is expected that the acquisition of reading habits from the embryonic stage, may help the child to get relief, encouragement, and reassurance from books or any reading material when facing a real-life challenge such as boredom and frustrations. Reading is the process of looking at written symbols and making meaning of them or the ability of a reader to understand a writer's message (Owusu- Acheaw & Larson, 2014). This means that reading is a process of searching for new ideas, consolation, or information to satisfy a specific need; it may also help people to become familiar with certain words, pronunciations as well as their usage in general.

Children's imagination can improve quickly through the constant reading of a variety of different text forms; reading assists children to explore nature in many ways – it helps them to identify symbols and objects at their early stages. Reading is not only, as it were, the door to knowledge gaining, but moreover, helps within the advancement of a person academically, socially, and personally (Chettri & Rout, 2013). Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) reported that good reading habits serve as a powerful weapon for Ghanaian students' academic achievement. Reading impacts the development of students' vocabulary; hence, failure to read fluently or constantly affects vocabulary and skills (Cain & Oakhill, 2011). This means that the acquisition of knowledge through reading depends largely on students' interest, competency, and readiness.

### Objectives of the study;

1. To identify factors that influence reading habits among students.
2. To establish time spent in reading.
3. To find out the availability and accessibility of reading resources.
4. To investigate measures to improve students' reading habits.

## Literature Review

### Factors affecting students' reading habits

There may be a myriad of factors that can influence poor reading habits among junior high school students. These may be general or personal factors such as difficulty to understand the content/ material, inability to acquire reading material due to poverty, poor home environment, the poor vision of the reader, parents' educational background, poor socio-economic conditions of parents, lack of reading materials in the school, poor school condition, lack of school or public library, truancy of the student, lack of adequate English teachers, lack of students' preparedness towards reading and lack of mentorship.

At the global level, studies indicated that reading is the critical skill needed for academic excellence in higher education (Cantrell, Rintamaa, Anderman, & Anderman, 2018; Huang, 2013). In the view of Hughes-Hassell, and Rodge (2007), the majority of students get access to their preferred reading materials in their leisure time from their homes, classes, school, and public libraries. Several parents persuaded their children to read for leisure; they also provide their children with storybooks and leisure reading materials (Ulper's, 2011).

Poor reading habits may also be attributed to the inability of school heads to provide the relevant reading books, absence of appropriate curriculum to help improve reading skills of students, crowded classroom(s) as well as a noisy learning environment to fulfill teaching pedagogy as indicated by (Lucas, 2011; Rany, 2013).

However, devoting time to read is imperative in forming an individual's personality as well as an avenue for successful learning (Lucas, 2011; Rany, 2013. Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) concluded that Malaysian University students were unwilling to read English language materials; due to students' background or home factors, as well as a school that has affected their reading habits. The

abysmal performance of students these days could be attributed to the absence of reading materials/facilities, or the failure of parents to provide reading resources.

In African countries, reading difficulties among children can be attributed to the failure of the school syllabus to nurture reading culture at the school-going age (Owu-Ewie, 2006).

Palani (2012) opines that the numerous recreational centres and the inception of mass media have declined the interest of individuals engaging in reading. The poor reading habit was accredited to the absence of qualified teachers, the excessive workload on the few available English Language teachers, and lack of required English textbook as well as poor attitude of pupils to English Language (Sofowora, 2011).

Early development of cognitive abilities can help children to read fluently or confidently than their counterparts with poor cognitive skills. The rest are socio-economic factors including; poor nutrition, absence of proper furniture for studies, home lighting system, lack of parents/guardians' involvement in children reading as well as lack of community libraries (Paananen et al., 2009).

In the Ghanaian context, Agyemang-Duah (2014) concludes that young people choose to sleep or watch movies in their free time over reading a daily paper or a book. Another major factor identified by the study was the stagnation in the number and use of public and community libraries where some of the factors influencing the falling educational standards since the interest of students in reading go beyond the suggested course materials.

Amlado (2015), attributed the dwindling standard of education in Ghana and Africa as a whole to the absence of effective reading in public basic schools. According to the study, teachers hardly teach reading as a key topic in class. Students depend exclusively on their comprehension textbooks for reading, consequently, they barely read novels and other literature. A research study attributed the falling standard of education to lack of students' interest in reading in the public basic schools. This negatively impacts students' performance in tertiary education, as well as the job market, which is worrying to policy makers (Amlado, 2015).

The inadequate reading facilities such as relevant books especially, interesting storybooks and libraries might also lead to students' inability to acquire reading skills during their youthful ages, which finally paves the way for poor academic performance in general.

### **Time Spent on Reading**

The amount of time that a student spends reading, likely helps him/her to acquire new knowledge/information. Reading can be described as a cognitive exercise in which the reader interacts with the author's ideas. Students who read regularly can acquire reading techniques that will help them to achieve different purposes in the academic journey.

Globally, good reading habits are perceived as key to the comprehensive development of an individual; an in-depth reading may help the reader to gain a complete concept of the information and content, and also retain information for a longer period.

Huang, Capps, Blacklock, and Garza (2014) concluded that on average, students spent 7.7 hours per week engaging in reading. A similar study by Sheorey and Mokhtari (1994; Mokhtari et al., 2009) has all established in their various studies that students spent 10.9 hours per week.

Recently, some parents in Ghana have now realised the importance of reading in students' life; it appears that the culture of reading among students has declined sharply which may be attributed to inadequate reading resources for students. The inability of students to spend enough hours on reading may be attributed to several factors such as inadequate reading materials, declining students' interest in reading as well as the socio-economic background of the parents.

Sotiloye and Bodunde (2018) indicated that out of 509 respondents, 30 (5.9%) spent 0-30 minutes on reading, another 70 (13.8%) spent 31- 60 minutes, whereas 140 (27.5%) spent 61- 90 minutes, another 110 (21.6%) and 159 (31.2%) indicated 91-120 minutes respectively.

In Africa, Nnadozie and Egwim (2008) found that a significant number of students spend less than two hours each day reading text. The researchers attributed less time spent on reading to the

availability of electronic gadgets that compete with print materials for the attention of students at homes and in schools.

In the Ghanaian context, Kavi et al. (2015) did a study at Saint Andrew's Anglican Complex Junior High School in Sekondi, Ghana with J. H. S. 1 and J. H. S. 2 students. It was revealed that the total time spent on reading per day had increased from less than an hour to 5 hours. The least time spent on reading was less than an hour. This was shown as 29 representing 33.3% of the respondents, whereas 4 of the respondents representing 4.6% indicated that they could read for more than 5 hours. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents 49 (56.3%) spent 1-2 hours per day on reading. This development might emanate from the effort of the school management to ensure that reading habits are cultivated by students, and ultimately extend to improve upon their academic performance.

Pobi (2016) indicated that out of 131 respondents, 62 (47.3%) spent 1-2 hours a day on reading, followed by 36 (27.5%) who read for 2-3 hours a day, whereas 12 (9.2%) read 3-4 hours; another 11 (8.4%) and 10 (7.6%) accounted for others and 4-5 hours a day. Poor reading habits among students raise cause for concern as it is envisioned that the effect of poor reading will cause great damage in all aspects of students' lives as well as a country's development including Ghana since students are expected to become future leaders of every country.

### **Availability and Accessibility to Reading Resources**

On the global scene, it is assumed that the availability and accessibility of reading resources at home and school can be key predictors that can motivate children to read during their early years. The home environment comes next before the school, and parents are perceived to be the first teachers as well as role models for their children. A study revealed that the majority of parents are engaged in their work that, they lack time for their children academic work, hence, do not devote any part of their time to involve their children in any reading exercises in the home. Additionally, some homes do not provide their children with relevant reading materials to expose children to reading activities (Castro et al., 2015).

Children access to reading materials in the early years help them to become eager to explore things written in books as they are developing into an adult, thereby cultivating reading culture will propel them to learn about things around them such as places, events, and experience (Deal & Peterson, 2016). A study undertook at the international level concluded that when children have access to learning materials as well as the acquisition of their books affects children's achievement. The study stressed further that there is a positive link between the available number of books in the home and academic attainment (Clark 2011).

A similar study by Clark and Poulton (2011) asserted that children who have books of their own enjoy reading and read more frequently. A study by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED, 2011) indicated that both primary and secondary schools they studied had well-resourced libraries, including computerized loan systems as well as facilities for accessing learning resources on an intranet. Inability to access both school and community libraries is a catastrophic situation that can negatively affect the reading habits of children, and also extend to derail the entire development of the nation as a whole.

Audit of school facilities indicated that out of 12 million South African learners, 8 million did not have access to libraries in the schools (Hart & Zinn, 2007). Similar results established that 42.9% of the respondents admitted that in Malaysia, parents provided them with reading material for learning purposes (Dollah, Fakeh, Kamal Rafedzi, Ibrahim, Rahim, Masron, & Ibrahim, 2017). This can be described as parents' involvement in children reading activities. In the African context, home and similar factors like perception of caregiver's role in children's reading activities, their level of education, and availability of print resources in the home were linked to caregivers' participation in children's reading (Wambiri & Ndani, 2015).

The high cost of reading materials and other learning facilities have put students out of the reach of the masses-coupled with the difficulty of acquiring local books. Writers are not empowered to write books; they also lack financial support as well as motivation (Gbadamosi, 2007). To instill the habits of reading, books must be available and accessible to children, therefore, it is the responsibility

of parents/guardians to provide children with the relevant reading materials at all levels of their lives.

The inability of students to have access to reading materials may be tantamount to reading famine in students' lives. Lack of well-stocked libraries, obsolete materials in the library, inadequate qualified librarians, poor reading environment, insufficient financial support from the government for procurement of relevant reading materials, absence of public libraries, illiteracy rate, as well as the level of poverty were the factors associated with poor reading habit among Nigerian students (Akande & Oyedapo, 2018). Availability, accessibility of reading resources, and libraries may be used to motivate children to read daily both in school and outside school. Parents and school directors should ensure that children are provided with the needed reading materials, lack of these resources may gradually defeat their purpose of attending school, this may also ruin their future lives.

Kevane and Sissao (2008) on how much do village libraries increase reading, revealed that rural communities in Burkina Faso such as Tuy Province of south – western Burkina Faso did not have either primary or secondary libraries, except shelf of books used by teachers. Adesulu (2016) pointed out that lack of reading habits, as well as well-stocked libraries, were recognized as the contributory factors to the 80 % failure rate recorded among Nigerian children. According to Dent (2013), the majority of the students were visiting the library to complete their school work, they obtained information about the world and also to do independent work through interaction with colleagues. These students visited the library for academic purposes, social and cultural. A study by Mule (2012) in the Okongo circuit in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia ascribed poor reading habits among students to the unavailability or absence of relevant reading materials available for children. Availability and accessibility of reading materials are motivators employed to encourage children to engage themselves in reading activities. Apart from parents' support and involvement in children reading, libraries also have an enviable role in the provision of relevant materials to enrich those who need them.

In the Ghanaian context, the efforts made by the successive governments to truncate the falling standards of education were recognized, however, little attention was done in the fields of reading as well as other supplementary materials that could support learning and teaching at the levels of basic schools (Alemna, 2002). Since the inception of the formal educational system in Ghana, books and other reading materials in a traditional format of a school library were not added in the set-up of schools (Alemna, 1994).

Report by the National Education Assessment (NEA), 2013 established that most of the students in basic schools including Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo schools in Northern Ghana could not read simple English or any Ghanaian language. According to the study, 50 percent of those evaluated could not pronounce a simple English or Ghanaian language word correctly (Atta-Quayson, 2007). The phenomenon of poor reading habits may have negative effects on student's academic performance and later defeat students' potentials for future academic development.

### **Factors to Improve Students' Reading Habits**

For any nation to reduce its illiteracy rate in society, there should be stringent measures put in place. These may include incentives in the form of awards instituted every year to award and persuade writers and publishers to focus on literature for Ghanaian students. Students at all levels should be encouraged to read storybooks through the guidance of their teachers and parents.

There are some pre-requisites for the promotion of reading – they include the following; the availability of relevant books in both schools and homes, serene environment, provision of time to read, support from parents and teachers. Kavi et al., (2015) findings established that out of 87 respondents, over half, 44 (50.6%) of them indicated more access to reading materials, another 26 (29.9%) indicated the need to make reading compulsory in the academic curriculum 26 (29.9%). On the other hand, 14 (16.1%) also indicated the need to have reading clubs in the school, while 3 (3.3%) indicated encouragement by family and friends for students to read.

Reading culture could be achieved through the establishment of both school and community libraries in various communities and schools, availability of a serene learning environment as well as the accessibility of appropriate books for children to read. Palani (2012) observes some measures to

improve reading as a programme that drives students with rewards to energize them to read beyond their required classroom work. Another measure is the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), a practice of distributing classroom time for everybody, including the instructor, to read self-selected materials. Others are the consistent use of a dictionary to encourage a simple understanding of what is studied, reading the daily newspaper, encouraging students to visit libraries every day. The phenomenon of reading culture could be achieved through government, Non-governmental Organisations, and stakeholders' intervention to salvage the situation and improve reading. There is a need for collective efforts from all stakeholders and the government to address the challenges students face in reading.

Aramide (2015) suggests the following measures to improve reading, they include; assistance from the government through the provision of monetary incentives to parents with socio-economic challenges to enable them to provide relevant materials to their children, the building of libraries, and stocking them with suitable reading books. The rest are, students should be encouraged to visit libraries and access their resources to improve the standard of reading. The provision of incentives to writers to engage good illustrators and to improve on the design; illustration, and production of children's material could be some of the measures to attract children to involve in reading activities daily. Issa et al., (2012) were of the view that guardians have a gigantic obligation to guarantee that their children/wards are constantly provided with the needed reading materials within the restrictions of their financial realities.

Providing basic home accessories for accomplishing conduciveness is a critical obligation of parents/guardians, which must be met – this will go a long way to improve children's reading interests and habits. The present study is limited to only two schools from different regions of Ghana to find out reading culture and its effect on students' academic performance. There is the need for future studies to expand the scope and include all Basic Schools in the two Regions to help establish the main factors that affect students' reading habit as well as their academic performance.

### Methodology

#### Research Design

The current study adopted a cross-sectional design. The study was conducted at Asantekwaa Seventh -Day Adventist (S.D.A) JHS, which is a public school in the Bono East Region of Ghana, and Valley View University (VVU) JHS – a private school in Oyibi in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. JHS1, JHS2, and JHS3 students from both schools were the target population; this comprised 131 students from the Asantekwaa S.D.A JHS in the Bono East Region of Ghana., while 190 from the VVU; hence, the total population was 321.

**Table 1.** Distribution of students by schools and classes/forms

Distribution of students by schools and classes/Forms		
Class/Form	Asantekwaa S.D.A.JHS	V V U JHS
JHS 1	36	80
JHS 2	42	61
JHS 3	53	49
Total	131	190
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>321</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2021

#### Sample size and Data Collection Technique

The students were stratified into strata based on their respective schools; the random sampling technique was used to sample 88 students from Asantekwaa S.D.A.JHS, whereas 124 were selected from VVU JHS; therefore, the sample size for the study was 212.

A questionnaire was structured based on the objectives of the study – they comprised four subheadings: thus, factors that influence students' reading habits, time spent in reading, and measures to improve students' reading habits were the themes used in the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the students by the researcher with the assistance of two teachers - one from each school.

**Data Collection**

An introductory letter was sent to the head teachers / senior facilitators of the two schools before permitting the researcher to administer the questionnaires to the respondents. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and also assured of their confidentiality before commencing the study.

**Analysis and Discussions**

The quantitative data was analysed descriptively (frequency and percentages) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20). The researcher took two weeks to collect the data after copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the students. A total of 212 questionnaires were distributed, of this, 88 were retrieved from Asantekwaa S.D.A. JHS, while 124 were retrieved from V V U JHS, and valid for the analysis, giving a response rate of 89.2%.

**Table 2.** Distribution of questionnaire by schools, and demographic characteristics

<b>Distribution of Questionnaire by schools</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>Number of questionnaires administered</b>		<b>No. retrieved</b>	<b>Non retrieved</b>
Asantekwaa S.D.A.JHS	88		79	9
V V U JHS	124		110	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>		<b>189</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS</b>		<b>VV U JHS</b>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	43	54.4	59	53.6
Female	36	45.6	51	46.4
Total	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>189</b>		
<b>Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS</b>			<b>VV U JHS</b>	
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
16 -18	3	3.8	9	8.2
14 – 16	26	32.9	38	34.5
12 -14	48	60.8	63	57.3
Above 18	2	2.5	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2021

Table 2 shows that out of 79 respondents, 43 (54.4%) from Asantekwaa S.D.A JHS were males and another 36 (45.6%) were females. On the side of VVU JHS, out of 110 respondents, 59 (53.6%) were males while 51 (46.4%) were females. Table 2 indicated again that 79 respondents, 48 (60.8%) in Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS were in the age bracket of 12-14 years, whereas 26 (32.9%) were in the age bracket of 14-16. Another 3 (3.8%) and 2 (2.5%) were between the ages of 16-18 and 18 years above respectively. On the part of the VVU JHS, 63 (57.3%) fell between the ages of 12-14 years, another 38 (34.5%) were between the age bracket of 14-16 years, whereas another 9 (8.2%) attained 16-18 years. However, none of the students obtained above 18 years.

**Table 3.** Factors influencing students' reading habits

Factors	Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS		VV U JHS	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
House chores	12	15.1	13	11.8
Lack of parents' involvement in reading activities at home	19	24.1	18	16.4
Lack of interest in reading	28	35.4	25	22.7
Television Watching	7	8.9	15	13.6
Lack of access to local novels /story books	13	16.5	39	35.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2021

The findings on factors that influence students reading habits established that a significant number of respondents 28 (35.4%) from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS indicated a lack of interest in reading; this was followed by 19 (24.1%) who indicated lack of parents' involvement in reading activities at home, and 13 (16.5%) indicated lack of access to local novels/story books. Similarly, on the side of VVU JHS, the majority of the respondents 39 (35.5%) attributed poor reading habits to lack of access to local novels/stories books, another 25 (22.7%) indicated a lack of interest in reading, while 18 (16.4%) accredited poor reading habit to their parent's inability to provide them with reading materials.

#### **Time Spent on Reading**

The respondents were asked to indicate the number of times they spent reading. The responses are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Time spent on reading

Time spent on reading	Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS		V V U JHS	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0 -30 min	22	27.8	13	11.8
35 -60	32	40.5	31	28.2
65 -70	9	11.4	18	16.4
75 above	16	20.3	48	43.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2021

The findings on time spent in reading established that 32 (40.5%) of the respondents in Asantekwaa S.D.A JHS admitted that they read between 35- 60 minutes, followed by 22 (27.8%) who read between 0-30 minutes, while 16 (20.3%) indicated 75 minutes above. On the other hand, 48 (43.6%) respondents of VVU read between 75 above, followed by 31 (28.2%) who read indicated 35 - 60 minutes, and 18 (16.4%) read between 65-70 minutes.



**Table 5.** Availability and accessibility to reading resources

Factors	Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS					VVU JHS				
	SA Freq (%)	A Freq (%)	U Freq (%)	SD Freq (%)	D Freq (%)	SA Freq (%)	A Freq (%)	U Freq (%)	SD Freq (%)	D Freq (%)
Availability of School library	-	-	4 (5.1)	75 (94.9)	-	53(48.2)	57(51.8)	-	-	-
Accessibility to public library	-	-		79 (100.0)	-	32(29.1)	38 (34.5)	11(10)	17(15.5)	12 (10.9)
Availability of reading materials in the school	36(45.6)	5(6.3)	2(2.5)	4 (5.1)	32(40.5)	34(30.9)	30 (27.3)	3(2.7)	22 (21.8)	19(17.3)
Accessibility to reading materials in school	11(13.9)	27(34.2)	3 (3.8)	13(16.5)	25(31.6)	32(29.1)	26 (23.6)	5(4.5)	18(16.4)	29 (26.4)
Availability of reading materials at home	16(20.3)	23(29.1)	5(6.3)	26(32.9)	9 (11.4)	30(27.3)	33(30)	-	25(22.7)	22(20)
Accessibility of reading materials at home	14 (17.7)	20 (25.3)	7(8.9)	16(20.3)	22(27.8)	37(33.6)	52(47.3)	-	-	21 (19.1)

**Source:** Field Survey 2021

The study sought to find out the availability and accessibility to reading resources. The findings revealed that out of 79 respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS, an overwhelming majority, 75 (94.9%) strongly disagreed that they do not have a library facility in their school, only 4 (5.1%) remain undecided. Subsequently, the findings from VVU JHS disclosed that out of 110 respondents, 57(51.8%) and 53 (48.2%) representing a hundred percent admitted that they have a library facility in the school.

The findings on whether students have access to library facilities or not, all the respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS disagreed that they do not have access to a library. Indeed, since there is no library available in the school, there would not be accessible as well.

Similarly, respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS admitted that there is no public library available, therefore, no access.

On the part of VVU JHS, 38 (34.5%) agreed that they have access to the school library, while 17(15.5%) strongly disagreed, and 11(10%) were undecided. The study also sought to find out the level of availability of readings materials in the school.

With this, 36 (45.6%) respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS strongly agreed that there were available reading materials in the school, while 32 (40.5%) disagreed, only 2 (2.5%) were undecided. Similarly, 34 (30.9%) respondents from VVU JHS indicated strongly agreed that reading materials were available in the school, this was followed by 22 (21.8%) who showed strongly disagreed.

Responses on accessibility to reading materials in the school revealed that 27(34.2%) of the respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS agreed that they have access to reading materials in the school, while 25 (31.6%) disagreed with the statement, only 3 (3.8%) were undecided. Subsequently, 32 (29.1%) respondents from VVU JHS admitted that they have access to reading materials in the schools, followed by 29 (26.4%), whereas 5(4.5%) were undecided. The study sought again to find out if reading materials were available in their homes. Twenty - six (32.9%) of the respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS strongly disagreed, while 23(29.1%) agreed that readings materials are available in their homes, only 5(6.3%) were undecided to the statement.

Similarly, the majority of the respondents from VVU JHS 33(30%) indicated that there were reading materials available to them at home, while 25(22.7%) strongly disagreed, 5(4.5%) were undecided. Responses on whether students have access to reading materials at home or not revealed

that, 20 (25.3%) from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS agreed that they have access to reading materials at home, followed by 22 (27.8) who disagreed, while 7(8.9) were undecided. In uniformity, students from VVU JHS indicated that they have access to reading materials in their homes which accounted for 37 (33.6%) agreed and 52(47.3%) strongly agreed. This may be attributed to adequate attention paid by parents of these children as well as some restrictions emanated from the authority since it is a private school.

**Measures to Improve Students' Reading Habits**

**Table 6.** Measures to improve students' reading habits

Measures	Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS		V V U JHS	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Parents should not engage children in excessive house chores	2	2.5	17	15.5
There should be access to reading materials for their children at all levels	28	35.4	31	28.2
Schools should add reading hours to their curriculum	7	8.9	21	19.1
There should be libraries in schools	13	16.5	-	-
Children should be allowed to watch only educational programmes on Television	5	6.3	5	4.5
Children should have access to local novels/story books	24	30.4	36	32.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey 2021

The findings on measures to improve students' reading habits established that out of 79 respondents, 28 (35.4%) from Asantekwaa S.D.A JHS indicated that parents should provide reading materials to their children, this was followed by 24 (30.4%) who asserted that children should have access to local novels /story books, while 13 (16.5%) also revealed that schools should establish libraries. On the part of VVU JHS, out of 110 respondents, 36 (32.7%) also indicated access to local novels /story books, another 31 (28.2%) indicated that parents should provide reading materials to their children, while 21(19.1%) mentioned that schools should add reading hours in their curriculum or timetable.

**Analysis and Discussions**

**Factors that influence students' poor reading habits**

The first objective of the study was to find out factors that influence students' poor reading habits. The findings revealed that students from Asantekwaa S.D.A JHS indicated a lack of interest in reading this accounted for 28 (35.4%). This finding is in line with Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) whose study concluded that 80.1% of the respondents of Malaysian University students were unwilling to read English language materials due to poor parents' background and school factors. The results from VVU JHS revealed a lack of access to local novels /story books with 39 (35.5%).

This result disagreed with Hughes -Hassell and Rodge (2007), whose study reported that the majority of students get access to their preferred reading materials in their leisure time from their homes, classes, school, and public libraries. The results from both schools indicated that parents and

schools are expected to establish a good reading environment to motivate students to inculcate the habits of reading.

### **Time spent on reading**

The study also examined the time spent on reading. The results from Asantekwaa S.D.A

J H S students show that they read between 35-60 minutes. This result deviates from that of Sotiloye and Bodunde (2018), whose findings established that out of 509 respondents, 159 (31.2%) read between 91-120 minutes and 120 above. On the other hand, most of the students of VVU JHS read between 75 minutes and above. This finding supports the study of Pobi (2016) which found that 62 (47.3%) spent 1-2 hours a day engaging in reading.

### **Availability and Accessibility to Reading Resources**

The findings on availability and accessibility to reading resources revealed that out of 79 respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS, 75 (94.9%) showed that they did not have a library facility available in their school. This finding deviates from that of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED, 2011) which indicated that both primary and secondary schools they studied had well-resourced libraries, including computerized loan systems as well as facilities for accessing learning resources on an intranet. Results from VVU JHS disclosed that all the respondents, thus, hundred percent admitted that a library facility is available in the school. This is not consistent with the findings of Mule (2012) which indicated that poor reading habits among students in the Okongo circuit in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia were ascribed to unavailability or absence of relevant reading materials available to children.

The findings on whether students have access to library facilities or not, all the respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS revealed that they did not have access to a library facility in the school. This corroborates with Hart and Zinn (2007) whose findings indicated that out of 12 million South African learners, 8 million did not have access to libraries in their schools. A substantial number of respondents from the VVU JHS, 38 (34.5%) agreed that they have access to the school library. This result is contradicting sharply with Adesulu (2016) whose results attributed poor reading habits to lack of access to a well-stocked library as the contributory factors to the 80 % failure rate recorded among Nigerian children. Twenty - six (32.9%) of the respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS hinted they did not have reading materials available in their homes. However, their counterparts from VVU JHS indicated that they have reading materials available in their homes.

This result affirmed the disclosure made by Clark (2011) that there is a positive link between the available number of books in the home and children's academic attainment. The finding also corroborates earlier revelation by Wambiri and Ndani (2015) that the availability of print resources in the home was linked to parents, guidance/caregivers' involvement in children's reading activities.

### **Measures to improve students' reading habits**

The researcher sought to find out about measures to improve students' reading habits, the findings show that the majority of the respondents from Asantekwaa S.D. A JHS with 28 (35.4%) indicated that there should be access to reading materials at all levels for children. This result is consistent with the study of Deal and Peterson (2016) which concluded that children's access to reading materials in their early years will help them to become eager to read things written in books as they are developing to adult, as well as to cultivate reading culture. This finding attests to the disclosure made by Clark and Poulton (2011) that children who have books of their own enjoy reading more and read more frequently. To find out about measures to improve students' reading habits, a significant number of the respondents from VVU JHS indicated that children should have access to local novels/story books. This finding is a complete deviation from that of Palani (2012), which suggested some measures such as the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) like a practice of distributing classroom time for everybody, including the instructor, to read self-selected materials, the consistent use of a dictionary to encourage a simple understanding of words, reading the daily newspaper, and also to encourage students to visit libraries every day.

### Limitation

Even though this study has some strengths, it is admitted that the population for the study was too small because of the sizes of the schools that were selected, therefore, the findings cannot be generalized. Additionally, distance, time, and financial challenges have limited the study to only two schools – although from different regions (Bono East Region and the Greater Region).

### Recommendations

The findings of this study recommend that parents / guardians, school management, and stakeholders should provide reading materials to their children. Parents should motivate students to inculcate the habit of reading, by providing them with the needed learning facilities or resources. Parents are advised to desist from engaging their children in excessive house chores which consumes part of their learning hours. Both parents and schools should create a conducive learning environment for students to learn than engaging them in more non-academic activities.

Schools should establish well-stocked libraries with interesting novels/story books to attract students to visit the library frequently. Schools should establish reading clubs and competitions to award or give prizes to students who will emerge as winners. Students should be aware that the acquisition of reading habit requires their active involvement.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the study was conducted to find out the factors that influence poor reading habits among students, benefits that students derive from reading, time spent in reading, frequency of students' engagement in reading, and measures to improve students' reading habits. Reading is a process; it can only be acquired through constant practices as well as regular attendance to libraries, and also frequent engagement in reading activities. The present study will therefore help parents / guardians and school management to become aware of the factors that influence poor reading habits among students. The findings of the study will fill the gap and also serve as a reference point for future studies in this area. Therefore, further studies can employ the mixed method approach.

Further studies in this field can also use quantitative method and increase the population size.

Further can be carried out in senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions.

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