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Research Article

FEASIBILITY OF USING READING CLUB AS A PANACEA AGAINST TRANS-NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND POOR PERFORMANCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The recent trafficking in persons is more savagery than its progeny, in which slaves were chained on their legs and necks and bound together in a convoy through Trans-Atlantic route to the whiteman's country. Ebonyi State is one of such states in Nigeria that is educationally disadvantaged and has fallen victim to human trafficking of all sorts. This study is aimed at investigating the feasibility of using reading club as a panacea to curbing the precarious trends of poor performances in school and human trafficking among secondary school students in Ebonyi State. The investigation employed a survey research design where 200 students were randomly sampled from four co-educational secondary schools. 15 items Questionnaire, which was validated by experts, was used for the elicitation of information from the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using a descriptive statistics of percentage counts and the findings unraveled the wiliness of students to accept the establishment of reading clubs in their schools based on their exposure to the ills of trafficking on their dignity as human and the conspicuous poor performances of senior secondary school students in examinations. Conclusion and recommendations were made thereafter.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four basic language skills, others being listening speaking and writing. Reading poses lots of problems to students especially in secondary schools. Many research studies have been conducted in the last decade with various evaluations on the problem of reading with a view to achieving success in reading. Debates have been organized by government and various concerned organizations on promotion of good reading culture. According to Onukaogu, A. E, Ania & Jegede, O.B (2003) reading is a total integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the effective, perceptual and cognitive domain.

In Nigeria, some researchers have carried out studies on poor reading culture amongst students and its implication to lifelong learning. Bambose (1999) carried out a study on students' reading problem and discovered the following factors: slow reading, ineffective recall of what is read, difficulty in distinguishing main idea from relevant facts, uncritical behaviour, and difficulty with creative reading interest as the impediments to good reading skills. In his study, he suggested that poor linguistic cultural experiences and lack of interest in

reading among Nigerian secondary school students etc. have to be improved. Combs (2002) held the same view with Bambose. Douglas (2002) asserts that every child must become fully competent in reading to succeed in school and discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a democratic society. This assertion made many Nigerian scholars to arrive at introducing reading clubs in secondary schools in order to curb reading problems among secondary school students. However this venture seems not to have thrived due to lack of motivation of the teachers and limited knowledge by the teachers on how to initiate this move.

Culture is a people's way of life and Sanders (2007) defines reading culture as a learned practice of seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through the written words. She said that the practice could be acquired through reading books, journals, magazines, newspapers etc. According to her, having a reading culture is imperative for citizens if the future of the country is to be guaranteed. Agada (2008) in citing Olaofe (2003) agrees that reading culture is an art of inculcating reading habits and interest through conducive reading environment and copious reading activities. He said that in school set up, the inculcations rests squarely on the decoder.

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Reading club, on the other hand, is an association of persons usually students of the same educational background who come together to read and share idea for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and skills in order to cope with their academic affairs. The practice usually starts at the junior primary school because reading is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years. In reading club, students have books read to them and are groomed by a facilitator on how to practice the act of reading these books themselves. The formation of reading club is just as that of other clubs like debating society, dramatic club etc. The heads of schools where reading clubs are introduced usually aid the exercise by providing textbooks, rendezvous, magazines, newspapers, journals, and other reading materials to help them learn effectively. Here, a child is groomed to be able to read, understand, interpret and give critical opinion over a read text.

The importance of reading to an individual and the society is numerous that Chika (2009) outlines the virtues of reading to include the provision of individual welfare, social progress, international understanding and the provision of skills, knowledge and the right attitude that frees one from idleness and ignorance. It also frees one from slavery because human trafficking is a form of modern slave trade. She points out that reading is not for only school but for life. Reading also enhances ones chances of success in school and beyond. Agada (2008) states that reading is an indispensable tool for lifelong learning process that effectively promotes intellectual development in the learners. Sanders (2007) stresses that reading is essential for full participation in modern society because it adds quality to life, provides access to culture and cultural heritage, broadens child's understanding of life, enables creativity to blossom in the child and affords that tools to explore a child's talent while learning about himself and his society. Maduabuchi (2007) includes that reading a book changes us forever as we return from the world we inhabit during our reading journeys with new insights about our surroundings and ourselves. Therefore, when teacher teach students to read, they are teaching them a transforming experience which opens new windows to the world and creates a life time of opportunities (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro and Cammack, 2004).

Reading exposes the reader to things that he/she never had inkling on. This aspect of reading is intended to be maximized in the club so as to boost the reading capacity of students and equally deter the teenagers in the reading club from agreeing to any form of slave labour. Ebonyi State being one of the states in Nigeria is educationally disadvantaged thereby making the teenagers susceptible to a lot inhuman act perpetrated by human traffickers. Speaking on the occasion of a workshop on human trafficking convened by the Nigeria Immigration Service, Cross River State Command and the Calabar Municipal Government, Dr. Popoola said, "Trafficking in persons, which has received global attention in recent times, is rated the second largest illegal and organized crime in the world after drugs in terms of revenue earnings." He noted that in Nigeria, "it has its victims among foreigners and Nigerians alike. They are usually transported by road, by sea and by air using several disguises, via Gabon, Cameroun and other

neighbouring countries to undertake inhuman jobs under degrading conditions (Ighodaro 2008).

This situation has continued unabated and most of the victims lured into this heinous crime are ignorant of the damaging consequences of this crime to their fundamental human right, psyche and life generally. Ebonyi State magnanimously provided free education to her people right from the birth of the State both to the rich and the poor. Unfortunately, these teens are oblivious of the power of education in making a permanent change in a man. They are convinced of a greener pastures to where they are been taken too and surprisingly, their parents give their consent to this crime on humanity without an iota of idea on the kind of torture their children go through in the hands of these torturers. Okoroamadi (2007: 2) asserts that:

The question bugging the minds of many remains: is human trafficking on the increase in Nigeria? Who are the masterminds of human trafficking? Who are mostly at risk of being trafficked? What are the methods employed by traffickers to lure/recruit their victims? What inhuman and unjust conditions are victims subjected to? What impact has the creation of National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) made in efforts to combat these ugly development, as well as the National Assembly? It is worthy to note that despite the effort being made by the Federal Government to stem the rising tide of human trafficking, the menace has not abated.

Education remains the way out and the essence of organizing reading clubs in school is to have a forum where discussions on the evil of such practices are discussed and experiences shared by the participants based on the context of the selected stories read and the prevalent situation in Ebonyi State. Okoroamadi (2007) opines that the menace of human trafficking requires prevention through education, increasing public awareness about economic alternatives, protection for victims of trafficking and prosecution of traffickers, as well as fostering close cooperation between government and the NGOs to enhance public education and awareness programmes targeted at the vulnerable groups.

Despite the importance of reading to both the teacher and the learner, there is virtually poor reading culture among secondary students in Nigeria and this could be attributed to one of the reasons towards their poor performances in their studies and vulnerability to societal crime such as human trafficking. The West African Examination Councils Chief Examiners Reports in English for (2014, 2015, and 2016) respectively placed the blame on students' inability to summarize and comprehend comprehension passages appropriately. Poor performances in examinations have been prevalent issues not only in Ebonyi State, but in Nigeria generally. Therefore, this study was initiated so as to ascertain the feasibility of establishing and promoting viable reading clubs in secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria as a way out of this dilemma.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the feasibility of establishing and promoting viable reading clubs in secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria.

The study aims specifically to

1. To find out the importance of reading club in the promotion of reading culture among secondary school students
2. Identify how the establishment of reading clubs could affect students' performance and curb human trafficking in Ebonyi State
3. To determine the feasibility of establishing and promoting reading clubs in secondary schools with the cooperation of the students.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions

1. Is reading club important in the promotion of reading culture?
2. Can the establishment of reading clubs in schools affect students' performance and curb human trafficking among secondary school students in Ebonyi State?
3. Should reading club be established and promoted in your secondary schools through your cooperation?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It was considered appropriate for the study because the study involves gathering opinions and information from secondary school students on the feasibility of establishing reading clubs in their schools. This study was carried out in secondary schools in Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State with five secondary schools randomly selected. The same simple random sampling technique was used to select 40 students from each of the schools who were given orientation on the benefits of reading club and the need for its establishment. A total of 200 male and female students constituted the sample. The opinions of these students were sought on the need to establish reading clubs in their schools as panacea to their poor performance and human trafficking in the State. A set of 15 items questionnaire was constructed and validated to elicit information on their degree of awareness on the need for the establishment of reading clubs based on their involvement in the 2 days orientation on the issue. Data were collected via the questionnaire and a descriptive statistics of simple percentage was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Research question I

Is reading club important in the promotion of reading culture?

S/N	Items	Yes	No
1.	Does reading club enhance students' communication skills?	148 74%	32 26%
2.	Is reading club aimed at encouraging students to read and experience the joy of reading?	180 90%	20 10%
3.	Are knowledge, information and entertainments derived from reading clubs through extensive reading of recommended books and articles?	176 88%	24 12%
4.	Can Stories told and discussed in the clubs help students in handling issues or similar problems of their present days?	187 93.5%	13 6.5%
5.	Can reading club boost the interest of students in reading and help to inculcate the habit of reading among them?	177 88.5%	23 11.5%

The above table indicated that reading club is important in the promotion of reading culture among secondary school students for a total of 74.5% respondents agreed and 29.5% rejected the same option. This is a positive development in the drive because if the majority of the students felt that it was not of importance to them, they would create an unfavourable scenario aimed at thwarting the motive of the establishment hereby creating truancy any time there would be club meeting.

Table 2 Can the establishment of reading clubs in school affect students' performance and curb human trafficking?

S/N	Items	Yes	No
1.	Would the extensive reading involved in reading club assist you in reading your books?	168 84%	32 16%
2.	Would the boredom in reading exercise be handled because of your enjoyment in reading clubs?	123 61.5%	77 38.5%
3.	Do you think that your performance in your academic work would improve because of your involvement in reading club?	189 94.5%	11 5.5%
4.	With the exposure on the ills of human trafficking as shared in your club, do you think that it will deter other students from obliging to such seducing offers?	134 67%	66 33%
5.	Can students in reading club act as crusaders to their peers in the villages on the dangers of getting involved in human trafficking of any sort?	126 63%	74 37%
		74%	26%

The above table indicated that reading club could affect students' performances and equally help in checkmating the activities of human traffickers in the lives of their peers in the villages positively. The 74 % of acceptance and 26% of rejected option, infer that majority of the students really agreed with the benefits that would emanate from reading club. They have understood the dangers involved in human trafficking and its adverse effects on their performances as students. Knowledge is very powerful and teenagers usually have overwhelming influence on others, the knowledge empowerment would definitely liberate them from this scourge.

Research Question 3: Should reading club be established and promoted in your secondary schools through your cooperation?

Table 3 Establishment of Reading Club in the schools

S/N	Items	Yes	No
1.	Would you support the establishment of reading clubs in your schools?	146 73%	54 27%
2.	Have you decided to join in the propagation of the ills of human trafficking to your friends through reading club?	129 64.5%	71 35.5%
3.	Will you attend the club meetings on the scheduled dates without constituting a nuisance to a peaceful meeting/ deliberation?	118 59%	82 41%
4.	Will you encourage other peers and friends to join the reading club?	168 84%	32 16%
5.	Do you intend to promote the growth of reading club in your school through your active participation?	168 84%	32 16%
		68.9%	32.1%

The above table revealed the feasibility of establishing and promoting reading clubs in secondary schools. A total of 68.9% accepted and 32.1% rejected the same option. This shows that a higher percentage of students agreed and declared their

willingness to see to the establishment and promotion of reading clubs in their schools without constituting a stumbling block to the progress of such a programme.

RESULT

The analyses presented revealed that:

1. Reading club is important in the promotion of reading culture
2. The establishment of reading clubs in schools would affect students' performances in secondary school and equally assist in curbing human trafficking through knowledge sharing
3. There would be maximum cooperation from the students on the establishment and promotion reading clubs in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The respondents in answering the Research Question 1 attested to the importance of reading club in the promotion of reading culture among secondary school students. Having been exposed to the importance of reading club through the orientation they had, they came into full awareness of the indispensable role of reading in the enhancement of reading habit. The responses confirms the earlier assertion of Douglas (2002) that every child must become fully competent in reading to succeed in school and discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a democratic society. It further corroborates the position of Maduabuchi (2007) that reading a book changes us forever as we return from the world we inhabit during our reading journeys with new insights about our surroundings and ourselves.

On Research Question Two, which tries to ascertain, if the establishment of reading clubs in schools would affect students' performances in secondary school and equally assist in curbing human trafficking through knowledge sharing? The responses of the respondents revealed that when students are acculturated with reading skills, their lives will definitely be changed. Durance (1984) further confirmed this opinion through his stand that information essential for effective existence are shared and discussed in the club by students who are members. This makes students to flow freely among themselves in reading books of various issues that open the frontier of brainstorming and sharing of ideas. Through this forum, they become conversant with the things that surround them in the society especially the knowledge of the evil of human trafficking that is subtly ravaging the lives of the teenagers in the State.

The Third Research Question which is on the feasibility of establishing and promoting reading clubs in secondary schools through the maximum cooperation of the secondary school students, the result revealed that the students are willing to cooperate with the organizers of reading clubs. Many of them saw the inherent benefit in it and obliged to be members of the club when it eventually takes off in their schools. This confirms the position of Agada (2008), who stressed said that the art of inculcating reading habit in learners rest squarely on teachers. This informs why researchers have often suggested that teachers are the best instrument for the establishment and promotion of reading clubs. Teachers are very close to the

students and through a harmonious friendly learning environment, they would be able to convince students to act favourably towards this mission by guiding them on copious reading activities and in soliciting for the provision of reading materials.

CONCLUSION

Recent human trafficking on humans has really done untold harm to the dignity of the victims. Ebonyi State government has really launched several reprisal attacks to track down the syndicates involved in this heinous crime against her unfortunate citizens, but it has not yielded a commendable result. This crime has consequently misplaced the priority of education in the lives of most of the teenagers who are indigent and are often at the mercy of supposed helpers. Reading club is considered in this study as one of the ways to overcome this scourge because of power deposited in knowledge and awareness. The writers explored the feasibility of using reading clubs in secondary schools in Ebonyi State as panacea to human trafficking and poor performances. The responses portrayed light at the end of the tunnel. This study concludes on the fact that extensive kind of reading often experienced in reading clubs would really do what Sanders (2007) said which is to broaden students understanding of life, enable creativity to blossom in them and afford them the tools to explore talent while learning about themselves and the society. It will definitely keep out the menace of human trafficking and poor performances in schools.

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