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THE EFFECTIVE READING HABIT: A PRACTICE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Theme:

Managing Education System in Nigeria Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Many schools at different levels of education including Secondary schools worldwide were suspended classroom teaching due to the novel coronavirus pandemic and switched to online teaching. In most developing countries, physical learning is faced with a number of challenges part of which is inadequate facilities of instruction. Switching to online teaching and learning in these countries is likely to face challenges such as; lack of background knowledge of online teaching by teachers and learning by students, inadequate ICT facilities, poor electricity supply, the poor network for connection, constraints in purchasing data, etc. These challenges affect students of secondary schools in Nigeria thereby making them stayed without learning online and subsequently affect their performance. Now that the schools were reopened, it was opined that the students should imbibe effective reading habits to improve their academic performance. To support this, it was recommended that students/parents/schools should make available the required reference materials and time of extra reading among others.

KEYWORDS

Covid-19, pandemic, MERS, SARS, effective reading habit



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INTRODUCTION

The closure of schools as a result of the spread of COVID-19 has caused a setback to educational development globally and mostly affect the developing and under-developed countries. Despite the efforts made by some countries to offer online, radio and television learning, the efforts were defeated in poor countries where there is erratic electricity supply to make the learning devices functional. People think of survival, money to buy food before money for data to learn online. To fill the gap created by COVID-19, students need to develop an effective reading habit to improve their academic performance.

ORIGIN OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

There were many scholars and researchers who contributed and traced the origin of coronavirus. According to Ana (2020) researchers first identified a coronavirus in 1937. They isolated one that was responsible for a type of bronchitis in birds and had the potential to devastated poultry stocks. The name "Coronavirus" refers to the crown-like projections on the pathogen's surface. "Corona" in Latin means "halo" or "crown". Scientists found evidence of human coronaviruses in the 1960s, in the noses of people with common cold. Several human coronaviruses cause mild illness, including colds. In humans, coronavirus infections most often occur in the winter and early spring, but they can happen at any time.

COVID – 19

In late 2019, scientists started monitoring the outbreak of a new coronavirus, SARS-COV-2, which causes COVID-19. They first identified the virus in Wuhan, China. The virus spread rapidly around the world, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a pandemic in March 2020. The new coronavirus has been responsible for millions of infections globally, and it is has caused more than 2 million deaths. The mortality rate varies from country to country. In Nigeria, the deaths rate is approximately two thousand (2000), and in Africa the deaths rate is nearly hundred thousand (100, 000) respectively.

People with a higher risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms include older adults and those with underlying medical conditions, including high blood pressure, heart and lung problems, diabetes and cancer. According to the CDC, most children with COVID-19 have mild or no symptoms. Fewer children have developed COVID-19 than adults. That said, infants and children with certain of severe illness and death. There may also be a higher risk severe COVID-19 during pregnancy, as well as an increased risk of issues such as preterm birth (CDC, 2020).

SYMPTOMS OF COVID – 19

People may start to experience COVID-19 symptoms 2-14 days after exposure to the virus (WHO, 2021) in (Medical News Today). These include:

1. A fever
2. Chills
3. A cough
4. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
5. A sore throat
6. Congestion or a runny nose
7. Fatigue
8. A headache

9. Muscle pain
10. A new loss of taste or smell
11. Diarrhoea

STEPS TO BE TAKEN IF EXPOSED TO THE VIRUS

The following steps should be taken for anyone who may have been exposed to the virus (CDC, 2021) in (Medical News Today, 2021):

- i. Contacts a healthcare provider
- ii. Keeps track of the symptoms
- iii. Isolates at home, staying away from others as much as possible
- iv. Seeks emergency medical care for any severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing.

WAYS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 INFECTION

The Centre for Disease Control (CDC, 2021) recommended the following ways of reducing the risk of the COVID-19 infections:

- i. Wearing of face mask or covering in public
- ii. Washing the hands with soap and hot water frequently
- iii. Covering any sneeze or cough with a tissue, disposing it once and washing the hands.
- iv. Avoiding touching the face, nose and mouth.
- v. Regularly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that people frequently touch, such as doorknobs.
- vi. Limiting or avoiding handshakes.
- vii. Staying home and away from others if sick
- viii. Staying at least 6 feet away from people who are not housemates
- ix. Avoiding crowds whenever possible
- x. Avoiding poorly ventilated places whenever possible
- xi. Being watchful for any symptoms, including a high fever and a cough.

SARS

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS): - is a disease caused by an infection with a different coronavirus-SARS-COV. It can lead to a life threatening form of Pneumonia. SARS first appeared in Asia in February, 2003. The virus spread to more than two dozen countries, resulting in 8,098 infections and 774 deaths. The last reported cases in humans occurred in a laboratory-related outbreak in China in 2004.

SYMPTOMS OF SARS

Early symptoms are flu-like and include:

- i- A high fever
- ii- A headache
- iii- Body aches
- iv- Feeling of discomfort
- v- Mild respiratory symptoms in some cases.

The infection affects both the upper and lower respiratory tracks. After 7–10 days, the person may develop a dry cough. Also, Pneumonia, a severe lung infection, often develops. As SARS progresses, it can lead to failure of the lungs, liver or heart. During the outbreak, complications were more common among older adults. More than half of those who died from the disease were over the age of 65.

MERS

MERS is a Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, it is a severe respiratory illness caused by the MERS–CoV coronavirus. Scientists first recognised it in 2012 after reports in Saudi Arabia. After that it spread to other countries, including the United State of America. MERS has not become widespread in the same way as COVID–19. According to reported figures, about 30–40% of people with MERS died from the disease.

SYMPTOMS OF MERS

These symptoms include:

- i- Fever
- ii- Breathlessness
- iii- Coughing
- iv- Nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting, in some cases

Complications include Pneumonia and kidney failure. The illness spread through close contact with people who have the infection. People aged 1–99 years have had MERS, and severe symptoms were more common among older people and those with underlying health conditions or weakened immune systems. (Medical News Today, 2021).

CONCEPT OF EFFECTIVE READING HABIT

Effective reading habit is a well–planned and deliberate pattern of study which has attained a form of consistency on the part of students toward understanding academic subjects and passing at examination. Reading habit determines the academic performance of students to a great extent. Both reading and academic performances are interrelated and dependent on each other. Students often come from different levels of academic performance (Suhana and Haryudin, 2007). According to Raymond (2013) reading pushes you ahead of others. You become a leader among your mates when you know more than they do. Mental distinction is a function of volumes of information gathered and stored up there. Reading keeps you informed to perform.

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE READING HABIT

Effective reading habit has some of the following challenges according to (Raymond, 2013):

- i- Procrastination: - This means to put off intentionally the doing of something that should be done (Meriam-Webster Dictionary). Procrastination is a destroyer of vision. When you are good in putting off what you can do today tomorrow, you are definitely a servant of procrastination. Most often than not, what you put off today will eventually catch up with you tomorrow and might even cause you some havoc. When you leave reading by an hour, it will leave you by two (2) hours. “He who can read and those not read, is not better them he who cannot read, therefore, rea (Jumare, 2018)”.
- ii- Bad Company: - This implies to spend time with people who are not morally good. A lot of us are influenced and affected by our peers. Students are attached to their peers probably for behaviour or an attribute they admire in them. If the friends you keep are hardly interested in books or reading, you too would live up to the habit of not reading.
- iii- Home video, Films and Video Games: - These are audio–visual plays, drama and sports activities that are display by the use of electronic devices. Watching video films and playing video games have destroyed the reading habit of a lot of young minds and have prevented

many from forming one. Many students find it very difficult to sit down and read for 10 minutes but find no difficulty in sitting in front of a TV screen playing a video game or watching a home movie or film for as much as 3 – 6 hours. Students with such habit hardly create time to read books.

- iv- Poor Educational Will Power: - This refers to the ability to delay gratification, resisting short term temptations in order to meet long-term educational goals. The rise to affluence by many artistes and musicians has indoctrinated a lot of student not do read, because they believe that reading is a long road to wealth. The musicians and artistes live flamboyantly than their educated counterparts. They have mansions and drive exotic cars. So many young admire them and wish to be like them. As such, these youths find it very difficult to sit down and read, as all they ever fantasize is how to make fast money and defraud people.
- v- Emphasis on Paper Qualification: - This implies a situation where emphasis is laid so much on certificate than the carrier's level of knowledge. A certificate is worth its while when the holder can justifiably prove that he really merited it. Today, students have resorted in having it through dishonorable means thereby making them not to read for knowledge.

WAYS TO DEVELOP READING HABIT

Reading habit can be developed through the following ways. (Elizabeth, 2017):

1. Goal Determination: - This implies the positive emotional feeling that involves persevering towards a difficult ambition in spite challenge. For a student to develop a reading habit and culture, it is important to start off by setting a goal and backed up with a purpose of achieving the goal. This will make a student to be more motivated to keep pushing and achieve it.
2. Making Lists of Book to Read: - A student can develop a reading habit by making a list of books to read for a period of time. Making a reading list help students to keep focused to achieving his goal.
3. Reading Numbers of Pages a Day: - At least, 10 – 20 pages a day should be read by a student trying to develop reading habit. Being consistent in reading will help you stay focused as you look forward to accomplishing your daily goal of specific number of pages.
4. Providing Tool that Encourage Reading: - Good reading habit requires setting aside a good reading environment with appropriate table, chairs and other electronic devices that aid online reading effectively. A student can start up personal library or use the school library as well as public library for his meaningful reading. Put away all distractions e.g. Put off Tv.
5. Set Reading Time and Days: - Student should set aside specific time every day to read his assigned book for the times and days. Put away distractions of any kinds, as that may hinder effective reading.
6. Get a Reading Partner: - Goal is best achieved through cooperation. In order to develop reading habit, a student should set a reading partner who has a heart and willingness to read and create a plan to help you to achieve your reading habit goal.

CONCLUSION

There was a saying that “writing is a sign of reading, therefore, read you will certainly write. Students who make reading their habit and with all necessary provision of facilities to aid their reading are likely to perform better than who do not. Extra or reading ahead helps to improve students' academic performance and achievements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were recommended to assist students develop effective reading habit;

1. Students should set up their personal library with required reference materials for reading.
2. Schools should make their libraries well arranged with most necessary reading materials and accessible to students.
3. Public libraries should also be made functional and accessible to students.
4. Parents/schools should minimize the number of distractive materials such as television games, films and many more, in school and home.
5. Students should associate with peers who have the habit of reading.

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