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# Study Habits and Study Skills of Senior Secondary School Students in Ikpoba- Okha Local Government Area of Edo State

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***Abstract:*** *The study investigated the study habits of senior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 13,330 students. Two hundred randomly selected students formed the sample. The instrument for the study was a "Questionnaire on the Study Habits of Senior Secondary School Students". Data obtained from the instrument were analyzed using frequency count, simple percentages, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and ANOVA. Findings revealed that students reported having good study habits and study skills. In addition, there were no significant differences in students' study habits based on gender and subject selection. It was recommended among others, that students should find conducive places to study outside school each day.*

## Introduction

Secondary education is the education offered to pupils after primary school. It is a bridge between the primary and the tertiary level of education. It is of six-year duration and given in two stages, junior and senior levels of three years each. This level of education completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level and aims at laying the foundations for lifelong learning and human development, by offering more subject- or skill-oriented instruction.

At all levels of education, there is tremendous pressure on learners to earn good grades as academic achievement is assumed to possess predictive value and is used as a requirement for progress through the various stages of education. Many parents desire that their children achieve high academically. This desire puts a lot of pressure on students, teachers, schools and the entire education system. Thus, the school system revolves around the academic achievement of students. However, as desirable as high academic achievement is at the end of the senior secondary school stage, reports have shown that students' performance is still a cause for concern. For example, Sadiq et al. (2020) observe that the yearly results of the Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (SSCE) justify the claim of generally poor performance of students in both internal and external examinations. Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011) similarly aver that there is persistent poor

performance of secondary school students in public examinations such as the SSCE conducted by The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO).

Moreover, the results released by WAEC give credence to the observations of poor performance of students. For instance, its results statistics for 2016-2018 showed that the candidates in the country who had 5 credits and above including Mathematics and English Language was 33.81%. For Edo State specifically, the result for private candidates for the three years showed that only 6.17% of those who sat for the examination had five credits and above including Mathematics and English Language while for public candidates, it was 62.40% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Although the figure is high for public candidates, the remaining 38.60% of candidates who did not perform well is still significant. In addition, although the number of candidates who had 5 credits and above including English Language and Mathematics in the 2021 SSCE conducted by WAEC was 81.7% (Oscar, 2021), there is still room for improvement especially when the rise in examination malpractice considered.

Several factors can affect students' academic performance; two of them are their study habits and their study skills. Studying, which entails learning from reading, is perhaps the most important skill students can acquire in school. However, studying is a difficult skill and many students never become proficient at it (Feudel & Dietz, 2019; Kowalski, 2020). According to Nsini and Emeya (2015), study habit is the behavioural styles that students form systematically towards learning and academic achievement. Study habit is a habit of studying that is acquired through routine practices and repetition (Egbujuo & Ajagun, 2019). Study habit typically denotes the degree to which a student engages in regular acts of studying characterized by appropriate studying routines such as review of academic materials, occurring in an environment that is conducive to studying (Egbujuo, 2017). According to Bashir and Mattoo (2012), study habit is a well-planned, consistent and deliberate pattern of study on the part of a student, geared towards understanding academic subjects and passing examinations.

Good study habits include studying every day, studying in a quiet place, turning off devices such as the TV and mobile phones that could interfere with the study, taking notes of important contents, taking regular rests and breaks, studying based on one's learning style, and prioritizing the difficult contents (Jafari et al., 2019). Some poor study habits include procrastination, selective reading, evading the study, studying while distracted and studying in inappropriate conditions among others (Ebele & Olofu, 2017). In addition, several studies have shown a positive relationship between good study habits and improved academic achievement and vice versa. For example, Aransi (2020) found that the study habits variables in his study jointly had a statistically significant effect on secondary school student's academic achievement in Economics in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. In addition, Kyauta and Dachia's (2018) study at Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria, indicated a significant relationship between study habits and students' academic performance.

Similarly, Bernard and Nyikwagh, (2017) reported a significant positive correlation between students' study habits and academic performance among physics students at the University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. In Ghana, Joseph et al. (2018) found that study habits significantly accounted for observed variances in public junior high school student's academic

performance in Ekumfi District. In Iran, Jafari et al. (2019) reported a direct and significant relationship between study habits and academic achievement of medical sciences students at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences. Other studies have reported similar results (Mendezabal, 2013; Omotere, 2011; Osa-Edoh & Alutu, 2012; and Parua & Archana, 2011).

However, spending a considerable amount of time studying is not a sufficient condition for learning to occur, it is merely a necessary condition. Hence, as Ebele and Olofu (2017) observe, students can study for a long period and retain very little. Thus, the focus should be on how students can study more effectively or how they can productively use the time spent studying to learn. One way to increase productive time is to make students learn study skills. Thus, study skills and study habits are complementary in function as improvement in one usually leads to improvement in the other (Aguirre et al., 2020; Nouhi, 2009).

Study skills can be defined as "competence in acquiring, recording, organizing, synthesizing, remembering, and using information and ideas" (Proctor et al., 2006, p. 37). According to Ball (2011), study skills comprise an integrated repertoire of strategies and tactics which enhances the acquisition, retention, and application of new information. Study skills ultimately help students to effectively learn and organise and recall new information. Research on the frontal lobe of the brain indicates that early adolescents are not fully prepared to be self-regulated and independent learners (Boller, 2008). As a result, secondary school students may struggle in selecting and applying appropriate study skills to their academic tasks. Hence, Thorpe (2010) suggests that for secondary school students to develop a solid set of study skills, they need to receive study skills instruction regularly. Examples of study skills are time management, use of the library, listening, reading, writing, taking class notes, doing revision, doing homework, preparing for presentations and projects, utilizing available resources, preparing for and taking exams, using a mind map, and teaching others, among others (Wernersbach, Crowley, Bates & Rosenthal, 2014; Demircioglu, 2007; Hassanbeigi et al., 2011; and Wagner, Schober & Spiel, 2008).

Specifically, it has been shown that having many study skills and being able to choose the ones suitable for a specific situation leads to positive results (Bjorn & Viggo, 2016). In other words, if students have a wide range of study skills, learning will likely be positively affected as they will be able to adapt the way they learn in different situations. For example, Michael et al. (2020) found that giving students training in study skills positively affected their academic achievement and retention in Geography in Jalingo metropolis of Taraba State. Similarly, in a study by Israel and Bahago (2020) in Jos East, Nigeria, findings indicated that training in study skills resulted in an improved level of study skills and improved academic achievement of low-achieving Upper Basic students in Mathematics.

Furthermore, as it pertains to the state of students' study habits and study skills, different studies have reported different findings. Onuekwe's (2015) study in Enugu State, Nigeria revealed that a majority of the students' reading habit was fair or average. Akporehwe and Billy (2018) study revealed that the study habits of the students in senior secondary school were generally good. Ugwuja's (2007) investigation on the study habits adopted by Junior Secondary School students in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu state showed that they generally had bad study habits. Similarly, Lalzawmliana and Lalnunfeli's (2021) study indicated that a majority of the students

had poor study habits while Bulenta et al. (2015) reported a high study skill level for undergraduate students.

Moreover, several factors can affect students' study habits and study skills. Nsini and Emeya's study (2015) found interest, motivation, attitude, teaching method, good library facilities, environment and peer group as factors affecting students' study habits. Similarly, SheeRa (2012) argues that study habits can be affected by factors such as the age of a student, home environment, studying materials, television and computer games, social networks (Facebook), students' determination and aspiration, financial and economic status of parents, the surrounding such as entertainment centre, games, the rule of the school, the teaching style of teachers, the leisure of the students, some activities in schools, availability of library, the nature of friends and peer group, assignments and homework restrictions, students' parents' educational background, parents' support, household chores, family problems, procrastination and poor time management among others.

Specifically, students' gender and their subject selection (that is, whether they are science or art students) are variables that could influence their study habits and study skills. As it relates to students' gender, Aransi (2020) found no significant gender difference in the study habits of secondary school students of Economics in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. In Singh's (2019) study, although the female students reported having a higher study habits than the males, the difference was not significant. Ugwuja (2007) found no significant difference in the study habit patterns of male and female students. However, Ossai (2012) found a significant gender difference in secondary school students study habits with female students reporting better study habits than males. Ehiozuwa and Anaso's (2013) study revealed a significant difference between male and female students' study habits with the males reporting better study habits than the females. Bukata et al. (2015) found a significant sex difference in students' study skills in favour of females.

As it pertains to subject selection, Kumar (2017) compared the study habits of science and arts senior secondary school students of Fatchabad district in Haryana. A significant difference was found between the study habits of science and arts students with the science students reporting better study habits. Similarly, Rana and Deepika's (2020) study which sought to ascertain the differences in the study habits of higher secondary school students for various variables indicated that overall, science students possessed better study habits in comparison to art students. Again, Lalzawmliana and Lalnunfeli's (2021) findings revealed that science students in higher secondary schools had better study habits than arts students as they devoted more time to study.

The discussion on the study habit and study skills of students so far has highlighted the importance of these concepts to the academic success of students. Similarly, a review of the various studies has revealed contradictions in findings. Again, studies on the subject of students' study habits and skills seem to be missing in the context of schools in Benin City, Nigeria. Based on this background, this study examined the study habits and study skills of senior secondary school students in the Ikpoba-Okha Local Government area of Edo State.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are secondary school students study habits?
2. What factors affect students' study habits?
3. What study skills do students possess?

**Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

$H_{01}$: There is no significant difference in students' study habits based on subject selection.

$H_{02}$: There is no significant difference in students' study habits based on gender.

**Method and Materials**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The design was considered appropriate as it is suitable for collecting data needed for describing the variables of the study (students' study habits and skills) as they are at present without the need for manipulating them. The population of the study comprises thirteen thousand three hundred and thirty students (13,330) in the twenty (20) senior secondary schools in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State (Edo State Ministry of Education, 2021). The sample for the study consists of two hundred (200) students drawn from four (4) secondary schools in Ikpoba Okha LGA. The simple random sampling technique using the ballot procedure was used in selecting the four schools used in the study. Fifty students were then randomly selected from each of the sampled schools which brings the total number of students sampled to two hundred (200).

The instrument used in generating data for this study is a self-designed questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on the Study Habits of Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State" (QSSAPS). It is made up of four sections (A, B, C and D). Section 'A' covers the demographic information of the respondents. Section 'B' contains seven items designed to determine students' study habits. Section 'C' contains ten items designed to ascertain factors affecting students' study habits. Section 'D' contains ten items designed to identify the study skills possessed by students. Sections 'B' 'C' and 'D' are modified Likert-type scales with four options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire is scaled thus for positively worded items: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. The reverse is the case for negatively worded items. A scale of 2.5 (the average of the scale) was set as the decision marker. When the mean of the responses to an item is greater than or equal to 2.5, the item is accepted and vice versa.

To determine the validity of the instrument, the draft copies of the instrument were read by three lecturers in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology (CIT), Faculty of Education, University of Benin. Their inputs and suggestions were embedded in the final draft of the instrument. To determine the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to 20 respondents who were part of the population but were excluded from the study sample. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach alpha and it yielded a reliability coefficient of .81 for Section B, .75 for Section C and .80 for Section D which were deemed suitable for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher to the respondents. The collection of the instrument was on-the-spot.

Research questions one, two and three were answered using frequency counts, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. Hypothesis one was tested using a t-test while hypothesis two was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

**Findings**

**Table1: Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the State of Students' Study Habits**

| | Items | N | SA | A | D | SD | SD | Mean | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I use my free time between classes for reading | 200 | 47 (23.5%) | 118 (59.0%) | 31 (15.5%) | 4 (2.0%) | 0.69 | 3.04 | Agree |
| 2 | I always do my homework on time. | 200 | 69 (34.5%) | 96 (48.0%) | 29 (14.5%) | 5 (2.5%) | 2.18 | 3.30 | Agree |
| 3 | I study what I was taught each day I return home from school. | 200 | 53 (26.5%) | 100 (50.0%) | 42 (21.0%) | 5 (2.5%) | 0.76 | 3.01 | Agree |
| 4 | I set aside regular time to study every day. | 200 | 64 (32.0%) | 91 (45.5%) | 41 (20.5%) | 4 (2.0%) | 0.78 | 3.08 | Agree |
| 5 | I read books other than my school books. | 200 | 74 (37.0%) | 82 (41.0%) | 36 (18.0%) | 8 (4.0%) | 0.38 | 3.11 | Agree |
| 6 | I have a study timetable. | 200 | 69 (34.5%) | 73 (36.5%) | 52 (26.0%) | 5 (2.5%) | 0.85 | 3.05 | Agree |
| 7 | I study at the last minute before tests/examinations. | 200 | 66 (33.0%) | 65 (32.5%) | 48 (24.0%) | 21 (10.5%) | 0.99 | 2.88 | Agree |

Research question one sought to examine the state of students' study habits. The data analyzed in Table 1 reveal that the participants agreed to all the items: representing one hundred (100%) of the items on the questionnaire which indicates that students have good study habits. Only item 7 ($x = 2.88$) indicates poor study habits.

**Table 2: Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Factors Affecting Students' Study Habits**

| | Items | N | SA | A | D | SD | Standard Deviation | Mean | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | I do not have a conducive place to study. | 200 | 38 (19.0%) | 74 (37.0%) | 73 (36.5%) | 15 (7.5%) | 2.68 | 2.68 | Agree |
| 9 | I am always too tired to study. | 200 | 25 (12.5%) | 60 (30.0%) | 82 (41.0%) | 33 (16.5%) | 2.39 | 2.39 | Disagree |
| 10 | I cannot manage my time. | 200 | 17 (8.5%) | 58 (29.0%) | 101 (50.5%) | 24 (12.0%) | 2.34 | 2.34 | Disagree |
| 11 | I have no study timetable. | 200 | 23 (11.5%) | 63 (31.5%) | 79 (39.5%) | 35 (17.5%) | 2.37 | 2.37 | Disagree |
| 12 | I do not like to study. | 200 | 16 (8.0%) | 37 (18.5%) | 95 (47.5%) | 52 (26.0%) | 2.09 | 2.09 | Disagree |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | I cannot stick to a schedule for studying. | 200 | 19 (9.5%) | 73 (36.5%) | 80 (40.0%) | 28 (14.0%) | 2.42 | 2.42 | Disagree |
| 14 | My friends distract me whenever I want to study. | 200 | 37 (18.5%) | 73 (36.5%) | 67 (33.5%) | 23 (11.5%) | 2.62 | 2.62 | Agree |
| 15 | I do not have the recommended school textbooks to study. | 200 | 26 (13.0%) | 68 (34.0%) | 77 (38.5%) | 29 (14.5%) | 2.46 | 2.46 | Disagree |
| 16 | My house chores prevent me from Studying. | 200 | 29 (14.5%) | 45 (22.5%) | 89 (44.5%) | 36 (18.0%) | 2.45 | 2.45 | Disagree |
| 17 | I have difficulty comprehending when I study. | 200 | 21 (10.5%) | 75 (37.5%) | 72 (36.0%) | 32 (16.0%) | 2.43 | 2.43 | Disagree |

The data analyzed in Table 2 reveal that not having a conducive place to study ($\overline{X} = 2.68$) and distraction by friends ($\overline{X} = 2.62$) are the factors affecting students' study habits. Other factors are not perceived to affect students' study habits.

**Table 3: Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Students' Study Skills**

| | **Items** | **N** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **Standard Deviation** | **Mean** | **Decision** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | I study to understand information rather than to memorize it. | 200 | 75 (31.5%) | 92 (46.5%) | 29 (14.5%) | 2 (1.0%) | 3.36 | 3.36 | Agree |
| 19 | I always remember the main points after reading. | 200 | 59 (29.5%) | 114 (57.0%) | 21 (10.5%) | 5 (2.5%) | 3.34 | 3.34 | Agree |
| 20 | I take notes while reading. | 200 | 55 (27.5%) | 102 (51.0%) | 34 (17.0%) | 7 (3.5%) | 3.28 | 3.28 | Agree |
| 21 | I usually test myself on the material I read while studying for an examination. | 200 | 70 (35.0%) | 102 (51.0%) | 23 (11.5%) | 5 (2.5%) | 3.19 | 3.19 | Agree |
| 22 | I find it easy to locate the main idea of a paragraph or passage. | 199 | 54 (27.0%) | 88 (44.0%) | 48 (24.0%) | 9 (4.5%) | 2.94 | 2.94 | Agree |
| 23 | I concentrate while reading. | 200 | 65 (32.5%) | 99 (49.5%) | 31 (15.5%) | 5 (2.5%) | 3.14 | 3.14 | Agree |
| 24 | I underline important information in the materials I study. | 200 | 64 (32.0%) | 88 (44.0%) | 42 (21.0%) | 4 (2.0%) | 3.07 | 3.07 | Agree |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | I try to connect what I am studying with what I already know. | 200 | 67 (33.5%) | 99 (49.5%) | 31 (15.5%) | 2 (1.0%) | 3.17 | 3.17 | Agree |
| 26 | I usually summarize my study and note the main points of the material I read. | 200 | 64 (32.0%) | 90 (45.0%) | 42 (21.0%) | 3 (1.5%) | 3.09 | 3.09 | Agree |
| 27 | I raise questions from the study material. | 200 | 56 (28.0%) | 99 (49.5%) | 38 (19.0%) | 6 (3.0%) | 3.04 | 3.04 | Agree |

Table 3 reveals that the students agreed to all ten items. This result indicates that the respondents claim to possess good study skills such as reading for understanding, note taking, summarizing, questioning, connecting prior knowledge to present knowledge, underlining important points, concentration and reviewing materials read.

**Table 4: t-test on Students' Study Habits and Gender**

| Variable | No Exp. | $\overline{X}$ | SD | df | t-Cal. | t-Critical | Sig (2-tailed) | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 108 | 6.06 | 1.04 | 198 | .18 | 1.96 | .86 | Not significant |
| Female | 92 | 6.09 | 1.12 | | | | | |

Table 4 shows that p (.86) > 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that students do not differ in their study habits based on gender. However, the mean for the female students is higher than that for the males which indicate that female students have better study habits although the difference is not significant.

**Table 5: ANOVA of Students' Study Habits and Subject Selection**

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | .526 | 2 | .26 | .22 | .80 |
| Within Groups | 234.19 | 197 | 1.19 | | |
| Total | 234.72 | 199 | | | |

Table 5 shows that p (.80) > 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that students do not differ in their study habits based on subject selection.

**Discussion of Findings**

This study sought to examine secondary school students' study habits and study skills. In addition, the factors affecting students' study habits were considered. Previous studies have indicated the importance of study habits and skills to students' academic success. However, a review of several studies revealed contradictions in findings particularly as it relates to the differences in students' reading habits based on gender and subject selection. In addition, studies within the context of secondary schools in Benin City seem not to have been carried out. Hence, this study sought to fill the gap.

The study's findings in relation to research question one showed that students have good study habits. That students reported having good study habits is an indication that they attach importance to studying. This result aligns with those of Akporehwe and Billy (2018) and Onuekwe (2015).

One reason that could account for the result may be students' awareness of the importance of good study habits to their academic success. For example, item 2 (doing homework on time) in the questionnaire had the highest mean (($\overline{X}$ =3.30). This indicates, as similarly noted by Akporehwe and Billy (2018), that students do not want to fail in their continuous assessments. Hence, they are not careless in doing their homework. In like manner, it could be said that students do not want to fail in examinations, hence they attach importance to studying. However, the findings contradict those of Lalzawmliana and Lalnunfeli (2021) and Ugwuja (2007). This could perhaps be as a result of the different contexts in which the studies were conducted. Lalzawmliana and Lalnunfeli (2021) study was done in India while that of Ugwuja, although carried out in Nigeria, focused on students in junior secondary school.

Moreover, analysis of data for research question two indicated that students identified an unconducive environment for study and distraction from friends as two out of the ten listed factors affecting their study habits. This finding agrees with those of Nsini and Emeya (2015) and SheeRa (2012). They listed several factors, including studying in an unconducive environment and distraction from friends as capable of affecting students' study habits. In addition, the fact that only two factors were identified by the students as affecting their study habits seems to indicate that there is a limited number of factors that affect these students' study habits.

Regarding results for research question three, it was revealed that students indicated possessing all the study skills listed in the questionnaire such as reading for understanding, note taking, summarizing, questioning, connecting prior knowledge to present knowledge, underlining important points, concentration and reviewing materials read. These findings, therefore, indicate that the student's possession of good study habits is complemented by their possession of several important study skills. The results correspond with Nouhi's (2009) observation that mastering study skills make studying more effective and enjoyable which in turn, strengthens the students' interest so they spend more time studying. Similarly, Aguirre et al. (2020) aver that a student cannot develop effective study skills without good study habits.

Moreover, the result for hypothesis one showed no gender difference in students' study habits. Although the female students had a higher mean than the males, the difference was not significant. This result corroborates those of Aransi (2020), Ugwuja (2007) and Singh (2019) whose studies found no significant gender differences in students' study habits. However, the result contradicts those of Bukata et al. (2015), Ehiozuwa and Anaso (2013) and Ossai (2012) who all reported a significant gender difference in students' study habits.

Lastly result for hypothesis two indicated that students do not differ in their study habits based on subject selection. In other words, whether they are in Arts, Science or Social Science classes, there was no difference in their study habits. This result runs contrary to the findings of Kumar (2017), Lalzawmliana and Lalnunfeli (2021) and Rana and Deepika (2020) studies in which Science students reported better study habits than Arts students. A possible reason for this result may be because generally, the students' study habits level was high across all subject groups.

## Conclusion

Students' possession of good study habits and study skills are necessary ingredients for success in school. The findings of this study have revealed that students possess good study habits and skills.

Furthermore, there were no significant differences in students' study habits based on gender and subject selection. If students continue with their good study habits and study skills, it is hoped that their academic performance across all the school subjects would be positively affected. However, it is necessary to highlight the fact that the sample size for the study was small and restricted to only one out of the five Local Government Areas in Benin City. As such, the generalizability of the study's findings is limited.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

- Parents, teachers and other stakeholders in education should encourage students to maintain their good study habits so that their academic performance can be positively affected.
- Students should find suitable and comfortable places to study. Similarly, the school authorities, the government and parents should try their best in providing suitable places for students' private study both at home and at school.
- Lastly, students should make friends with those who would encourage them to strengthen their good study habits so that peer influence would not be one of the distractions when it comes to studying.

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