



READING CULTURE IN ZAMBIA: PERSPECTIVES OF SELECTED HOUSEHOLDS OF ZAMBIA ON THEIR READING PRACTICES.

by

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Abstract

The absence of reading habits has historically dominated much of Zambian households regardless of the presence or absence of reading materials. These reading practices were the focus of the present study that sought to address three research questions: (i) to determine the historical culture of reading in respondents' households, (ii) to establish the views of selected Zambian residents on factors contributing to low reading culture in Zambia, and (iii) to ascertain the workable solutions to improve the reading culture among some Zambians. Data was collected using face-to-face and telephone interviews and open-ended questionnaire. The qualitative mode of inquiry was used to guide this study. Findings of the study revealed an increase in reading culture among some urban families with access to smart phones, tablets, and laptops. However, families that lacked such gadgets did not practice reading in their homes with exception of a few. Those that practiced reading had a bias to social media posts and shorter ones were preferred. Students liked reading but not for fun or pleasure, but it was a requirement for them to pass certain courses. In all homes, the history of consistent reading practices was absent to a considerable extent. Among the reasons cited for poor reading culture included historical background, Inadequate resources/poverty, and disinterestedness of readers. The provision of free internet in public places, the creation of public libraries in districts, creation of a reading hour in schools, and encouraging families to develop interest in reading to their children were among the recommendations.

Key Words: *reading culture, reading culture in Africa, reading, reading culture in Zambia.*



Introduction

The reading culture in Africa has long been low due to the influence of the oral tradition where information was passed from one generation to another through the word of mouth (Correia, 2018; Finnegan, 2012; Somjee, 2000). The absence of reading materials, lack of basic domestic needs, and disinterestedness of the people in reading are additional historical factors that have contributed to low reading culture in most African countries (Commeyras & Mazile, 2011; Baleeta, 2005; Luangala, 2002). The rich oral tradition of Africa has a long-lasting influence on reading, and this may take several generations for most people to embrace and actively practice reading daily (Cooper, 1983; Green, 1985). There is slow progress recorded in the development of the reading culture in most Africans (Rosenberg, 2003; Sandars, 2007). Despite the low development of the reading culture among African countries, it is envisaged that this trend has drastically changed in the last few decades due to the increase in technological advancements and the outburst of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook (Rafiq, Khan, Asim, & Arif, 2020). While print media may still record low reading practices, social and electronic media has a different picture. The aim of this paper was to establish the views of selected residents of Zambia on reading practices in their households.

Context of Reading and Culture

Thomas (1967) defined reading as the interpretation of printed or written symbols into speech with meaning. This involves the ability to interpret printed materials on a page with a view of deciphering the meaning. Hoover and Gough (1990) noted that in the simple view of reading, the major purpose of reading is to comprehend a text. While comprehending a text may involve other processes such as word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation, reading is usually meant to gain knowledge from the text. Furthermore, reading is an important skill that helps communities to

become knowledgeable, get directions, warnings, and survive daily. Mkandawire (2019) noted that reading can be applied in several ways such as interpretation of a Bible, reading newspapers, medical prescription, receipts from a shopping mall and others. Surviving in a society demands several skills that may include reading relevant materials such as signposts, letters, religious books, poems, reports, news items, social media, and others (Silavwe et al, 2019). Reading is an important pre-occupation for various groups of people in the society. Workers need literacy to work well, students' need reading skills to pass examinations, teachers, preachers, and parents need the same skills to stay informed and afloat. For students, reading is a tool for understanding all subjects on every course of study at their institutions (Mkandawire, 2018). Furthermore, Agada (2008) stated that reading is an indispensable tool for learning in the various hierarchies of modern educational set up which he opines facilitates the learning process. Reading is a vital skill in finding a decent job, this is because well-paying jobs require reading as a part of job performance. There are reports and memos which must be read and responded to. In addition, Sandars (2007), stress that reading is essential to full participation in modern society because it adds quality to life, provides access to culture and cultural heritage including self-improvement, pleasure and relaxation, and a feeling of pride and prestige. Reading broadens a child's understanding of life, affords him/her the tool to explore his/her talent while learning about himself and his society. A study by Antwi (1985) revealed that people who are struggling with reading begin to experience failure and related negative effects in interpersonal skills in school and in the society. These effects can include task- avoidance and acting out, lower levels of personal regard, and seeking of personal values in venues that are anti-social (Otache, 2020). The author further added that poor reading culture results to students failing examinations and not understanding the subjects that they learn. The other effect of poor reading culture is that the population of a country will have alliterate citizens, which



will result into to low participation in modern society, this means that people will not be active in the political running of a nation as they cannot contribute to the decision making of the nation. The other effect is that people will not have vast knowledge of the happenings around them, they will be limited to the little knowledge that they have and thus they will be ignorant.

Culture refers to what people do daily in their lives (Bate, 2009). Mkandawire and Daka (2018:140) note that “Culture is perceived as people’s way of life that impinges on every aspect of their daily practices.” In this context, the practice of reading or not reading is a form of culture that can be exhibited in members of a community. Reading culture in this case refers to a practice of reading among people of a particular community.

The history of reading culture in Zambia and most African countries can be traced to life before modernization and colonization. In pre-colonial Zambia, there was no formal education, and the issue of reading was unheard of in people’s communities. Zambia like most African countries was organised in small groups usually in family clans and this was an oral society from time immemorial (Chondoka, 2001). Information was normally passed on by word of mouth, in most cases done through dialogue, storytelling, folk music, and riddles. This means that the people of Zambia relied on oral histories, including the telling of creation myths, proverbs and folktales passed down through generations’ (Ronnas, 2009). However, the introduction of formal education by the ‘colonialists’ when they came to settle in Zambia in the 1800s brought a shift to the way information and knowledge ought to be shared. However, this method of knowledge has not culminated into a culture of reading as the people have not fully embraced reading, especially in rural areas where the use of oral methods to transmit information is the major known mode and preferred. There is a preference in most cases to spend time chatting and interacting with friends and family than reading a book which is considered

a solitary activity. In some instances, even serious contracts and transactions are still made and agreed upon orally, without anything in writing (Sangkaeo, 1999). This kind of faith in each other was a widespread practice.

When developed countries begun expanding their area of influence through colonization and evangelism, the concept of reading and their culture was also introduced. Brantlinger (1985) noted that the Scramble for Africa (also called the Partition of Africa, or the Conquest of Africa), was the invasion, occupation, division, and colonization of much of Africa by seven Western European powers during a brief period known to historians as the New Imperialism from 1881 to 1914. Very few African countries were already colonized before this period and some missionaries were already settled in Africa. Manchishi (2004) noted that wherever the missionaries settled, they were characterized by the establishment of the school, a church and health center. They also began to produce teaching and learning materials so that those that were becoming literate could begin to develop their reading culture. The production and circulation of materials continued and Chileshe et al (2018) indicated that in the subsequent years, the material production companies increased yet, the factor of reading among the people is still low. There are people who do not like reading as a daily practice and this has contributed to the continued low reading levels in Zambia. Despite the efforts made by the government and other agencies to improve the reading culture, there is much that still needs to be done (Sampa, 2003). A study by Luangala (2002) concluded that there was a poor reading culture among Lusaka residents and the researcher raised concerns that if the culture of not reading continues, Zambia may have a population of alliterates in future.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

- (i) What was the history of reading among respondents' households?

(ii) What were the views of selected residents of Zambia on factors contributing to low reading culture in Zambia?

(iii) What workable solutions were there to improve the reading culture among selected Zambians?

Framing

The development of reading culture in individuals is to a considerable extent influenced by the environment and the communities in which they grow. The social cultural theory informed the current study. Cherry (2019) noted that the sociocultural theory looks at the important contributions that society makes to individual development. "This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live." (p.2) Sociocultural theory also suggests that human learning is a social process (Cherry, 2019). When children see their parents, siblings, peers, and teachers read, they are likely to develop an interest in reading and therefore, the environment plays a critical role in the development of the reading culture. Nkhata et al., (2019) observed theories help guide the direction of the research by supporting its design and framing.

Materials and Methods

Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018:173) noted that "a research design is a plan or strategy that is drawn up for organizing the research and making it practical so that research questions can be answered based on evidence and warranty". This study used a descriptive research design because its focus was on describing the behaviours and reading practices in respondents' households.

According to McMillan (2001:169), "a population is a group of elements or causes, whether individuals, objects or events, which conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of research." In this study therefore, our

targeted population was all the residents of Zambia aged above twelve years. The sample size was 116 respondents selected from all the ten provinces of Zambia through students that were studying at the University of Zambia (UNZA) and interviewed selected families that did not have students at (UNZA). Eighty-seven participants answered an open-ended questionnaire while twenty-nine (29) participants (three households per province) were interviewed either face-to-face or through telephone conversation.

This study used a non-probability sampling particularly the convenient and snowball sampling. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018:218) noted that “convenience sampling or as it is sometimes called accidental or opportunity sampling, involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained of those who happen to be available and accessible at the time”. Snowball sampling is applied when a researcher relies on participant referrals to recruit new participants. These two qualitative sampling types were used to sample research participants from specific provinces of Zambia.

Data Collection Methods

Mkandawire (2019:145) stated that “qualitative data collection methods are those strategies used to collect information based on subjective assessment of opinions, behavior, attitudes, and social interactions.” Common qualitative data collection methods include interviews, focus group discussion, observation, questionnaire, and document analysis. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018: 469) identified eight main kinds of data collection instruments with many variants included in each: questionnaires, interviews, observations, tests, personal constructs, role plays, visual media, using secondary data...”. This study however used interviews and questionnaire to collect data. The subsequent data collection guides or instruments were the interview guide

and the questionnaires students and selected Zambian citizens from the ten provinces of Zambia.

Data analysis

All the data collected from interviews and open-ended questionnaire was merged into one script. Content analysis through data coding was used to analyse the data from the script by creating specific codes that partly served as main themes addressing specific issues (Daka, 2019). Selected sections from the questionnaire were analysed using Microsoft Excel where basic quantitative statistics was generated.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented and discussed following the research questions of the study. These were (i) to determine the historical culture of reading in respondents' households, (ii) to establish the views of selected Zambian residents on factors contributing to low reading culture in Zambia, and (iii) to ascertain the workable solutions to improve the reading culture among selected Zambians. These questions have been stated as themes alongside with other data generated themes.

Historical Culture of Reading in Families of Zambia

The first research question sought to establish the historical culture of reading among respondents with their families in Zambia. When asked about reading habits in the family of one of the respondents who was also a parent, had the following to say.

Our parents never read to us, and we do not do that at our house.

Personally, I am not a fun of reading because it is a skill that requires more time and concentration and this feature in fact is lacked because

I work. The thing that makes me give up reading is because, when I have free time, I spend it with families and friends, and I do not think of books.

The research participant further explained that even though most working-class parents disliked reading, they appreciate it, and they wish that their children would master and practice so that they can gain more knowledge. These findings agree with Commeyras & Mazile (2011) who noted that the essence reading literature is to learn and get entertained. Although reading to learn is unpopular practice in Africa, it is home to European countries (Luangala, 2002). When asked about family reading habits and practices, another respondent indicated:

mmmm to be truthful, we do not read a lot at home for things like books and newspapers, but we read a lot on WhatsApp and Facebook. Exceedingly rare when we see something interesting like a magazine and Newspapers that have interesting heading that I or my husband like, then we read...

The above statement imply that selected Zambian citizens rarely read print materials as they think the content, they read is not interesting. Silavwe et al, (2019) noted that people that read for fun only read materials that interest them and anything that deviates from that is not read. Another response from a working-class citizen stated that his family did not practice reading much at home. As he reports:

We read our phone messages and Facebook and WhatsApp everyday but not reading books because, it is hard-to-find books and sometimes, it is just strange to start reading a book like you are a student at school. We read information on WhatsApp much also, we read all the short messages. I feel lazy to read a long text on something. My mother was illiterate, but my father could read in church but not at home...

The findings above imply that parents read social media only and that their father parents, although he knew how to read, did not read stories to the children at home. "Reading is

important because it broadens our knowledge, learn more about other people's cultures, and expand our vocabulary" a teacher respondent noted. The observation is in tandem Rosenberg (2003) who noted that reading widens readers horizons and amusement as they discover and appreciate the creation and imagination of author in the text.

Another respondent noted that: *"I know how to read and write but it is simply hard to just pick up a book and start reading all of it cover to cover"* he continued, *"because I find it strange."* The respondent, however, read social media materials in comparison to print media. These findings resonate with Correia (2018) and Finnegan (2012) who on separate accounts reported that effect of oral tradition is seen in people's resistance to the reading tradition. The reading culture in Africa has long been low due to the influence of the oral tradition where information was passed from one generation to another through the word of mouth (Somjee, 2000).

Most families interviewed did not report an extensive history of reading by their parents or guardians but seemed to show progress for their children and soon, the landscape of reading culture in Zambia and Africa will change. Further data from the interviews with respondents indicated that the following.

When we were growing up, we were six in our family; me, my two brothers, and sisters. It was hard to find books for our parents to read to us because we were in the village that time but what they did was to narrate sweet stories that taught so much to us.

This is part of what Finnegan (2012) described as the oral tradition where he believed that all African families were founded on the oral tradition and introducing the world of reading and literacy may take some time to completely settle in the people. Another respondent stated.

We do practice reading at home although it is not much. In a year, I can read at least one book or at least much of the pages in one book.

This is better than my parents because they did not know how to read. When my children bring homework at home, I help them and sometimes it is a book they need to read, and we do that. My husband also read to children some stories sometimes but at times he just tells them an oral story. Every day, I read something on Facebook or WhatsApp.

These findings agree with Iversen and Mkandawire (2020) who reported that some parents in Zambia showed willingness to help their children to read. However, some parents have severe challenges with work or inability to help children read. One of the research participants noted that *“those people that do not like to read are missing out a lot because reading is important as it helps in knowing things and broadening knowledge.”* Another respondent had this to say *“Social media is the means today. We get information through messages, videos, pictures and many more minutes after happening.”*

The parents that were interviewed indicated that they practiced reading in their homes daily especially on phone messages and social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. However, they did not read printed books or printed materials with exception of a few cases such as religious materials like a Bible. Those that liked reading on social media, they equally stated that they did not like to read long text but shorter ones. This resonates with Luangala (2002) who observed that Zambia soon may have a population of people that know how to read but they do not want to read.

Some citizens on the study indicated that they were not able to read or write and therefore, issues of family reading history did not apply to them as their parents were equally illiterate. A respondent had this to say:

I do not know how to read, and it is hard to help my son with work from school. His father also is struggling to read, and I know he cannot help him. We only encourage him to go to school so that he

can be a teacher one day. No, my parents also did not know how to read.

The findings imply that while some members in the family may express willingness to help their families develop literacy skills, they have historical limitations and lacks the means to help them. With sadness, one respondent noted that she did not know how to read and so was her father and mother and their parents as well.

Students were equally interviewed on their reading habits with that of their families. Some students indicated that they did not see any family member read any materials other than the Bible and they too followed that pattern. Selected students indicated that they did see their parents read novels occasionally, but they were not introduced to any sort of reading habits other than encourage them to concentrate on their academic work. Hence, this made them grow up with the same mindset and thought that one only must read for academic purposes.

Aspects of findings from the interviews did not entirely agree with the data collected from the questionnaire. In the interviews, most respondents said they did not read print materials but, in the questionnaire, they indicated that they read print materials.

The Views of Selected Zambians on Factors Contributing to Low Reading Culture

The second research question sought to seek the views of selected residents of Zambia on the reasons for the low reading culture. Assorted reasons were cited, and these included family background of readers, poverty or domestic challenges, school and teacher factors and the general attitude of the people. These are presented in data driven themes below.

(a) Family Background

Selected respondents indicated that the family background of individuals have a role to play in practicing reading. One respondent indicated that.

Family background of students and any citizen affects their reading habits. Parents are the first teachers of any citizen right from childhood. Children should be introduced into the act of reading at early age even before the child steps into school so that children can imbibe reading as a means of self-development and enjoyment. This is because when a habit is formed it is always difficult to break; thus, with good reading habits, high school students would find tertiary education easy, interesting and attain success in their academic career. However, if parents or guardians do not read or encourage their households to read, its unlikely they members of such homes may practice reading.

Akande and Oyedapo (2018) study also noted that children need to be introduced to the act of reading way early in before they are spoiled by other things their words have to offer. Okoro (2004) equally emphasised the need for children to be introduced to the practice of reading early in their lives. Multiple respondents believed that families played a significant role in developing reading practices or culture. Parents called change of mindset so that families are in the position develop reading practices in their households. A family is one is first social institution besides a school. As such, it has immense potential to stimulate or stifle the reading culture of those belonging to it, especially children. In fact, Ganakumaran (2004) asserted that lack of reading among Malaysian students is attributed to lack of reading exposure at home and its surrounding. There are multiple factors as to why this is so in Zambia. One of the factors mentioned during the study was attributed to the emergency of technology particularly social media platforms which have replaced the proficient reading habits. Because of this, new forms



of presenting information in short form have had negative impact on the attitude to read books that would otherwise contain information in paragraphs, pages, and chapters. He further noted that reading was important as it broaden their knowledge in diverse ways, but it was hard to just pick up a book and read whole of it cover to cover. Mumba and Mkandawire (2020) reaffirmed this position by observing that the children who do best in literacy skills at school are those who come from where children see their parents engaging in reading activities. The parent cited above attributed a lack of reading culture to difficulty in finding books and reading materials. Mkandawire (2012) noted that lack of materials in homes and learning institutions is not a surprising phenomenon in Zambia as most institutions do not have sufficient instructional materials. If this problem affects parents, then it could eventually impact on the negative reading culture of their children. If children notice their parents are visiting libraries, they will know that their parents place a high value on reading. “Moreover, if the children see their parents read a lot, they will also develop a cheerful outlook towards books and are more likely to enjoy reading throughout life” (Jackson, 2008).

(b) Domestic Hardships as a Factor Affecting the Reading Culture

Respondents expressed concern that even if they wanted to read something, getting hold of reading materials was not easy. One respondent had this in response to a follow up question. “*I do not like to read because books are hard to acquire and expensive.*” In addition, the respondent added that,

When I have money, I would rather buy food than a book which will not feed my family. Books here are expensive and you know in this era, money is not easy to find. I know I work but you see, our salaries have their own limitations. While books are important for us and the children, sometimes priorities matter in life.



Another respondent had this to say; *“I do have extra money sometimes to buy books, but you know, it’s just difficulty to buy a book when family has less food at home. The last time I bought a book to read for my son was three years ago and he never read it.”* The same respondent indicated that they bought note books every year for their son where to write notes at school but nothing else to read. The findings agree with Lesaux (2012) who contended that the reading performance of families from low-income household is typically low in comparison to their counterparts with much basic needs. Furthermore, Rosen (1970) noted that poverty affect reading practices in families and many times, poor reading results are more common in poverty-stricken homes than any other family.

(c) Schools and Teacher Factors

Schools are viewed as agents of change and the role teachers play in fostering this change is critical because pupils and students always look up to the teacher for guidance. When the teacher insists that pupils in class read a certain material, most pupils read it and, in the process, contributing to the development of their reading culture. One respondent had this to say.

Teachers also contribute to the reading habit of students; this includes the teaching method on how to read and must play a fundamental role in helping students to develop and maintain a positive reading habit. It is very unfortunate that some primary and secondary school teachers cannot read fluently. This to a large extent affects the students as it results into poor reading culture as teachers are role models to their students. The same responded conclude by posing a question that; if teachers cannot read fluently, how can their students read fluently?

Rosenberg (2003) contended that the revolution of reading development schools should begin with teacher transformation. The presence of exceptionally good teachers may highly contribute to the production of proficient reading development and promotion in Africa. When asked about reading practices, one pupil noted that they did not like reading, the following reason was provided for its absence.

Lack of Information and Communication Technology in my school.

We do not use computers and internet and I feel that this contributes to my poor reading culture because it is from the Internet that I could get a variety of books and reading materials to read beyond what is given within the confines of the four walls of the library. The same respondent then complained of not being exposed to any ICT facility as the school does not have a computer laboratory.

They went on to say, “*Technology is known to motivate students to read, and it is no wonder that some of my friends who are exposed to such facilities seem to do better in exams compared to me*”. Commeyras & Mazile (2011) contended that schools have long been serious agents of change and reading culture needs development, a school would be a very good starting point because that where much reading takes place. Ilori & Abdullahi (2006) that looked at the relationship between students’ level and their reading culture in Nigeria revealed that much reading that takes place in schools is associated with passing examinations and is seen as a means of accomplishing academic success. “This mind-set reflects in students’ lack of inspiration to read in their leisure time and outside their disciplines since they associate reading with textbooks and attending school” (Otache, 2020: 25).

(d) Reading to Pass Examinations

A student respondent noted that most college and university students read for purposes of passing examinations or assessments in a course. When the same student was asked about how often they visited the library to read, the response was that.

Most students do not go to the libraries these days to read or do their assignments. Some students go to the library, but for the wrong reason. At best, some students only go the library to write or copy notes, which ordinarily should not be the main reason for one to go to the library. I only go to the library when I am preparing for my exams.” Student one added that the school library is usually stocked with outdated books and other reading materials making them not interested in visiting it for other purposes.

Student two was also asked about what they thought of the reading culture of students, and they stipulated as follows:

Overemphasis on certificates instead of knowledge and skills breeds our poor reading culture. It does not make reading worthwhile. Besides, it will only make people to resort to obtaining certificates through shoddy deals. In Zambia today, in terms of quality, some olden days primary school-leavers are better than some present-day secondary school-leavers. It has even been argued that many Zambian graduates only possess paper qualifications without requisite knowledge and skills. In a society where undue importance is attached to certificates above knowledge acquisition, developing a strong reading culture becomes unattainable.

We explored further by asking selected lecturers at The University of Zambia whether their students like reading or not. In this question we had found out that one lecturer one had clarified that their students like reading but when they are motivated to read

by their own interest not through imposing. Agreeing, Lecturer 2 responded that most students do not prioritize reading, let alone developing a strong reading culture. They devote little or no time to reading. We further asked lecturer two what they thought students spend their time on and the response was that:

Some are always with their mobile phones, on the Internet and specifically on the social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. To some extent, social networking negatively affects one's reading culture. Most students now spend most of their time on social media platforms chatting and networking; others engage in playing video games; some others spend their time watching films or videos and listening to music.

Lecturer two concluded that *"It is worth noting that the time spent on the above activities, if invested in reading, is enough to enable one or a society to develop a strong reading culture."* According to Lecturer 3, most students are reluctant readers and usually read only when they are being assessed and, in these instances, it means that one does not need to read if there are no examinations to be written. He goes on to state that:

Many students are under the influence of the reading lecturer's puppeteer. They read on topics and do assignments on what the lecturer is interested in rather than on their own interests. This results in a reluctant reader. The implication is that such students will pass the examinations, even very well, but the knowledge is not there.

He also said that:

Ask such students questions about the same examinations that they had passed. You will be surprised that they will not be able to give you the correct answers. As students, the major focus when reading should be to acquire knowledge. And with the knowledge acquired,

passing examinations becomes easy. An examination-oriented type of reading forces students to read prescribed textbooks only and this does not help them to develop a strong reading culture.

Lecturer three ended by saying “After all, the debate on whether examination is the true test of knowledge has not been concluded.” These findings are supported by Mwanza & Mkandawire (2020) who noted that teaching that centered on passing examinations rather than the intended knowledge, skills, and values has been on the rise among teachers and this compromises on curriculum implementation. Most teachers in the 21st century are more obsessed with examination centered kind of teaching even if it means compromising on the quality of education.

Workable Solutions to Improve the Reading Culture Among some Zambian

The last research question sought to establish the recommendations made by selected residents of Zambia on ways of improving the reading culture in Zambia. Multiple responses were provided which have been categorized into specific sub themes.

(a) Improve Reading Practices in Homes

Most respondents called for the need to improve reading practices in homes. For example, some respondents noted that, it was important for parents to develop a habit of buying books for the family and read stories to the young people residing in the household so that children are compelled to develop the culture of reading. This in turn may contribute to the development of the reading culture in Zambia. One respondent had this to say.

Although it is difficult to buy books for my children to be reading, it is a right way to develop the skill. So, I will try to work on buying materials for them and may be building a small shelf of a library where to put the books.



This respondent further indicated that if all parents did that, she hoped reading culture could be improved. Another respondent suggested the introduction of family quiz based on a book of reading for a particular month. This parent noted that having family quizzes every month based on a book may help develop the culture of reading.

According to a parent, one way of improving Zambia's reading culture is by parents themselves developing the culture to read at home, no matter how tight their schedule is. *"This is important because the reading behaviours of parents will rub off on their children. Parents can even develop and transmit the attitudes of reading to their children."* The mentioned parent further encouraged fellow parents not to buy phones, particularly browse-able phones for their children who are in primary and secondary school. This is to prevent them from spending their time on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. Adding that *"parents should monitor how their children spend their time at home."* Duke & Block (2012) observed that improving the reading practices in homes greatly contribute to the improved reading across primary grades for learners.

(b) Schools Needs to Create a Reading Hour and Reading Clubs

The research participants called for the need for pupils in schools to practice reading every day where a reading hour could help them develop the culture of reading. Reading clubs were also emphasised to aid the development of reading habits. One of the interviewed Teachers suggested that each school should have a functional library manned by a professional teacher librarian as a way of improving reading habit of pupils. Rightly saying that:

Library programmes for children are founded on the knowledge that early literacy exercises have a positive effect on language growth, reading development and scholarly achievement. Parents should

teach their children to start reading from an early age. They should provide reading materials for their children.

The teacher affirmed this when they said that:

One of the most important gifts a parent or nurturing one can give to a child is to enable and encourage them to love reading. Pupils should be encouraged to read publicly to the hearing of others and that teachers should engage students in frequent reading and writing activities. School libraries should also organize readership promotion programmes from time to time and prizes to be awarded to students who are proficient in reading and writing.

The teacher ended by saying that, *“from henceforth, I will start organizing interclass reading competition. The best readers shall be rewarded handsomely either in cash or in kind to motivate them and others and I would encourage my fellow teachers to do the same.”* A student respondent had the following to add:

As students, we must prioritize reading by developing positive attitudes towards it. To this end, we must see reading as natural as play. We should make reading our hobby. We should devote our time to reading good literature books instead of spending it on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp; playing video games; listening to music; and watching films or videos.

Another student noted that schools should be provided with all the necessary ICT facilities such as computer laboratories, ICT equipment and workforce in that *“newspapers and many other print- out materials date very quickly, the Internet is continuously updated, more visually stimulating as well as being interactive, therefore promoting a more active approach to reading rather than a passive one.”* This pupil likewise believed that *“Learners*



with visual impairments cannot read texts like other sighted learners. It is only by embracing the use of technology in the classrooms that schools will ensure that they do not lack reading resources. Technology becomes handy as the learners who are totally blind can use audio or talking books”.

(c) Government Should Provide Free Internet in Public Places

Some households reported that the provision of free internet by government in public places would help improve the culture of reading because citizens of the country will have access to electronic materials such as books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, bulletins, legal documents, and public reports. They will also have a continued access to social media, and news outlets. Free internet may have increase access to the information and news as soon as it as released by media how in electronic text and video formats.

(d) Create More Public Libraries

Some respondents demanded for the creation of more public libraries where people could willingly go and read something of their choice. A respondent has this to say on public libraries.

Some of us really gets bored sometimes that may just want to go and read something somewhere. We don't have good phone network here but if we had a public library where we could occasionally go and read something, it would help us.

Although very few respondents demanded for the presence of a physical libraries in each district of Zambia, their demand may indeed increase readability for the residents in those districts.

(e) The Need for More Local Story Writers



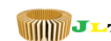
Negligible respondents called for authors in Zambia to publish story books for children and adults as a move to improve the culture of reading among Zambians. Publishers were urged to ease on the process of publishing books for the authors in Zambian languages so that there is a variety available literature to read. Respondents also encouraged the publishing of books in multiple local languages so that everyone with basic reading skill can read even in their local dialect and that there should be a provision of Wi-Fi in public spaces where people could access free e-books. Mulauzi and Munsanje (2019) also explains that lack of access to reading materials has been observed by multiple scholars as aspects of the contributing factors to the poor reading culture and deficient performance and the current national priority of expanding access to school education has meant that there are more learners in dire need of books.

Conclusion

The reading culture in Zambia has shown tremendous progress with a bias on social media. More homes with phones and other electronic gadgets that can connect to internet have shown an increase in reading and writing on social media particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Reading of phone messages was also reported to occur on daily basis. However, the reading of print media is still exceptionally low. Most household indicated an absence of reading of text with exception of religious books such as the Bible. Very few families reported active reading habits and with history of reading in their families.

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