



## **ROLE MODELING IN STORYTELLING FOR PROMOTING READING CULTURE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN-EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the effectiveness of role modeling and storytelling as strategies for improving the reading culture of primary school pupils. The poor reading habit among young learners has continued to affect literacy development and overall academic performance in many primary schools. This study adopted a mixed method quasi- experimental design that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A multistage sampling technique was used to select four primary schools in Ilorin-east Local Government Area. The study randomly selects 30 pupils per class, their teachers and parents purposively for interview and focus group discussion. A total of 248 participants (240 pupils, and 8 teachers) were sampled for this study. The study used questionnaire, classroom observation and interview guide to gather data. To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments were reviewed by experts in literacy education and educational research. The data from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics like frequency counts and percentage tables. Also, to ensure credibility and validity of findings, triangulation method was employed. The findings revealed that primary teachers are faced with challenges like lack of motivation, large class size, lack of interesting reading materials, and inadequate teachers training on integrating role modeling and storytelling to primary curriculum. It was recommended that teachers acting as role models should apply storytelling to reading and teaching method, and pupils should be encouraged to improve reading and learning ability.*

**Keywords:** Primary school teachers, Reading culture, Role modeling, Storytelling

**Introduction**

Reading is a fundamental skill for lifelong learning and academic success. A strong reading culture among pupils promotes creativity, imagination, and critical thinking (Guzmán & Rivas, 2021). However, in many primary schools, pupils show limited interest in reading, often preferring digital media or non-academic activities (Ogunleye, 2022). Storytelling is an age-old tradition that has been proven effective in capturing children's attention and fostering comprehension (Katz & Chard, 2023). When combined with role modeling, storytelling can serve as a practical literacy tool where teachers and parents exemplify positive reading behavior (Eze & Okafor, 2022). According to Social Learning Theory, children learn by observing and imitating the behaviors of role models. Thus, when teachers and parents model reading enthusiasm and curiosity during storytelling, pupils are more likely to adopt those attitudes.

Reading is a fundamental skill that forms the foundation for all other learning activities in primary education. Ruterana (2012) see "reading culture as the response that a community member accord to reading and writing in everyday life". A strong reading culture enables pupils to develop vocabulary, improve comprehension, enhance creativity, and build confidence in academic tasks. Despite its importance, many primary school pupils show little interest in reading, preferring non-academic activities and relying heavily on teachers for guidance. This has generated concern about declining literacy levels and poor academic performance in many schools. Although, role modeling and storytelling has great benefits but many teachers do not fully utilise these strategies due to limited resources, time constraints, or lack of adequate training in literacy instruction.

Also, pupils miss valuable opportunities to develop strong reading habits that support lifelong learning. This study therefore, seeks to examine how teachers' role modeling behaviors and the use of storytelling can influence the reading culture of primary school pupils. It aims to determine the extent to which these strategies are used, their effects on pupils' reading interest and motivation, and the challenges teachers face in implementing them. By exploring these issues, the study hopes to provide practical recommendations for improving literacy development in primary schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite numerous literacy interventions, many primary school pupils in developing contexts continue to demonstrate poor reading habits and lack intrinsic motivation to read (Mbugua & Waweru, 2020; Ogunleye, 2022). Many studies emphasize storytelling as a tool for language development, and others discuss the importance of teachers' attitudes toward reading. However very few studies have explored how teachers' personal reading habits, behaviors and modeling practices influence pupils' reading motivation, especially within Nigerian primary school context. Likewise, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how storytelling could be integrated alongside role modeling to improve reading culture. Traditional reading lessons often emphasize rote learning, ignoring interactive approaches such as storytelling that engage learners emotionally and cognitively (Daramola, 2023).

In addition, the importance of reading as the foundation for academic success, many primary

school pupils exhibit a poor reading culture. This challenge is reflected in pupils' low interest in reading, limited vocabulary, poor comprehension skills, and general lack of motivation to engage with books. Teachers, who are expected to guide and inspire pupils, often do not model positive reading habits, either due to one challenge or the other. Therefore, this study explore how role modeling in storytelling can promote reading culture of primary school teachers in selected primary schools in Ilorin East Local Government Area, Nigeria

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine how role modeling and storytelling can be used as effective strategies to improve the reading culture of primary school pupils. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. identify the extent to which primary school teachers serve as reading role models to their pupils;
2. examine how the use of storytelling influences pupils' interest and attitudes toward reading;
3. determine the relationship between teachers' role modeling behaviors and pupils' reading culture; and
4. identify the challenges teachers face in using role modeling and storytelling to promote reading habits.

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent do primary school teachers serve as role models in promoting reading culture among pupils?
2. How does storytelling influence pupils' interest and attitudes toward reading?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' role modeling behaviors and pupils' reading culture?
4. What challenges do primary school teachers encounter in using role modeling and storytelling to improve pupils' reading habits?

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it can address one of the fundamental challenges in primary education, the poor reading culture among pupils. By examining how role modeling and storytelling can be used to enhance reading habits, the study can contribute valuable insights to improving literacy instruction and learning outcomes in primary schools. Overall, this study will help bridge the gap between traditional oral storytelling and modern reading practices, reinforcing the idea that effective teacher behavior and culturally relevant teaching methods can transform pupils' attitudes toward reading.

**Review of Related Literature**

According to UNESCO (2015), a primary school teacher is a person who provides instruction in the foundational subjects of education, such as reading, writing, mathematics, and social studies, to children in the first stage of formal schooling. Similarly, Okeke (2004) defines a primary school teacher as a

professionally trained individual who facilitates learning and development in young learners through planned instruction, guidance, and moral example. In essence, primary school teachers introduce children to basic literacy and numeracy skills while also helping them develop social skills, moral values, curiosity, and confidence. Primary school teachers as role models play an essential role in shaping children's moral and educational foundations. Studies have shown that pupils often perceive teachers as secondary parental figures whose conduct deeply influences their motivation and self-esteem (Lumpkin, 2008). Furthermore, teachers who demonstrate a passion for learning and reading encourage their pupils to develop a reading culture and lifelong learning habits (Gambrell, 2011).

According to Gundogmus(2024) reading culture is defined as the love of reading continuously, and the ability to read effectively and critically. Similarly, Oyediran-Tidings (2010) defines reading culture as the habitual and deliberate act of reading for pleasure, information, and self-development. A reading culture also means the response that a community member accord to reading and writing in everyday life (Ruterana, 2012). The researcher sees reading as fundamental building block of learning and that reading enhances the chance of success at school and beyond. Therefore, reading culture can Improve literacy and language skills, enhances creativity and imagination, builds critical thinking and comprehension abilities, encourages lifelong learning and strengthens academic performance and intellectual development.

According to Lynch (2021) role modeling involves demonstrating certain behaviors or ideal way of acting within learning environment. The researcher believe that role modeling is intended to positively influence learners into copying the instructor's positive learning behaviors. In another study Sturm *et al.* (2017) revealed that reading is fun when it involves adult as reading models and interactant is a vital approach to improve reading motivation. When teachers and parents actively engage in reading and storytelling, children are more likely to develop a reading culture and positive attitudes toward learning (Baker, 2003; Gambrell, 2011). Role models demonstrate desirable behaviors that others aspire to emulate. Bonds (2016) notes that the best way to increase chances of learning is by asking the students to repeat after the teachers. In educational settings, especially among children, role models, such as teachers, parents, and community leaders, play a vital role in shaping learners' moral values, motivation, and social conduct. Effective role modeling in the classroom also enhances social relationships and classroom management. By demonstrating respect, cooperation, and emotional regulation, teachers create a positive learning environment that promotes empathy and social responsibility among pupils (Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan, 2007).

According to Manolescu (2025) storytelling is an interactive process whereby narrators and their audiences share their experience through the act of a story. And every story has heroes and examples that captivate when the storyteller knows how to engage the audience's attention and, in the process, entertain, educate, and transmit knowledge. Also, Gregor (2010) revealed that "reading instructions was not part of the curriculum, storytelling seems to have been the central components of the morning talks", the half-hour gathering of kindergarten teacher and students to begin the day with stories, songs and activities. The

author revealed that teachers embraced storytelling, arguing that it allows them to teach more effectively. In an educational context, storytelling is an instructional technique where teachers use stories to teach morals, language, reading comprehension, and cultural understanding (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). By listening to and retelling stories, children not only learn language but also develop a reading culture and appreciation for literature. When teachers act as storytellers, they serve as role models, demonstrating enthusiasm for reading and learning.

Okebukola *et al.* (2013) assesses the Nigerian primary teachers' skills and practices for motivating pupils to read. They conclude that teachers see motivating pupils as their responsibility but often lack preparation or resources to go beyond basal readers. Also, the study highlights gaps, training and resources, that limit teacher role-modelling effectiveness in Nigerian primary schools. In another study, "Teachers as readers project / Open University & UKLA" by Cremin *et al.* show that teachers who are enthusiastic, reflective readers (and who intentionally share their reading identities and practices) significantly boost children's engagement with reading and their identities as readers. The study gives direct evidence that teacher role-modeling (not only instruction) increases pupils' reading pleasure and reading participation.

In a book by Ruterana (2012) the state of reading culture in Rwanda, exploring historical, sociological and educational factors, was extensively discussed. It was on enhancing the culture of reading in Rwanda, with particular emphasis on reflections by students in tertiary institutions and reported on university students' reflections, citing factors such as reliance on oral tradition, limited access to reading materials, and the legacy of colonial/post-colonial education as reasons for weak reading culture. Another paper "Reflections on Societal Reading: The Case of Rwanda (2014) explores societal-level reading habits, noting that in many African contexts oral communication predominates and printed reading is less embedded in everyday life. In a study on home literacy practices among Rwandan families, Ruterana (2012) investigates how family environments (rural vs urban) support early literacy and subsequently reading culture.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a mixed method quasi- experimental design that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The mixed method design allows for a comprehensive understanding of how role modeling in storytelling influence reading culture of primary school teachers and pupils. The population consist of primary school pupils, their teachers and parents in the selected schools within the study area. This study focused on upper primary classes of primary 3-6 pupils who have already developed basic literacy skills. A multistage sampling technique was used to select four primary schools in Ilorin East local Government area (Burhanudeen LGEA Primary School A, Ipata LGEA Primary School B, LGEA Primary School Oke-Oyi and LGEA Primary School Oke-Ose) Kwara State. The study randomly selected 30 pupils per class, their teachers and parents purposively for interview and focus group discussion. A total of 268 participants (240 pupils, 28 teachers) were sampled for this study.

This study adopted questionnaires, classroom observation and interview guide to gather data from the population studied. To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments were reviewed by experts in literacy education and educational research. The data from the questionnaire were analyze using descriptive

statistics like frequency counts and percentage tables. Also, to ensure credibility and validity of findings, triangulation method was employed throughout the study.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

To pursue the objectives of this study, the researchers adopted simple frequency counts and percentage tables to analyse the data collected for easy clarification. This part gives detailed account of results and findings on the study through this heading; data analysis, analysis of questions as well as discussion of findings and results.

#### Section A: Demographic Information

**Table 1:** Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age, and Class

| <b>Variables</b> | <b>Category</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage ( %)</b> |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Gender           | Boys            | 110              | 45.8                   |
|                  | Girls           | 130              | 54.2                   |
|                  | Total           | 240              | 100                    |
| Age              | 6 - 8 years     | 60               | 25.0                   |
|                  | 9 - 11 years    | 80               | 33.3                   |
|                  | 12+ years       | 100              | 41.7                   |
|                  | Total           | 240              | 100                    |
| Class            | Primary 3       | 60               | 25.0                   |
|                  | Primary 4       | 60               | 25.0                   |
|                  | Primary 5       | 60               | 25.0                   |
|                  | Primary 6       | 60               | 25.0                   |
|                  | Total           | 240              | 100                    |

Table 1 shows the demographic information of respondents sampled for this study. The population were grouped by gender, 110(45.8%) boys and 130(54.2%) girls. According to their age, 60(25%) were between 6-8 years, 80(33.3%) were between 9-11 years, and 100(41.7%) were between 12+, respectively. Lastly, the data on the table revealed that all the respondents were given equal chance of performance 60(25.0%) were sampled from each school.

**RQ 1:** To what extent do teachers serve as role models in promoting reading culture of primary school pupils?

**Table 2:** Extent Teachers Serve as Role Models in Promoting Reading Culture among the Respondents

| S/N | Statements                                | Yes (%)   | No (%)    |
|-----|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1.  | Teachers read aloud                       | 170(70.8) | 70(29.2)  |
| 2.  | Teachers encourage pupils to read at home | 166(69.2) | 74(30.8)  |
| 3.  | Teachers use storytelling to teach morals | 160(66.7) | 80(33.3)  |
| 4.  | Teachers make reading fun                 | 140(58.3) | 100(41.6) |
| 5.  | Pupils are inspired by teachers           | 177(73.8) | 63(26.3)  |

Table 2 shows the responses on the extent which teachers serve as role models in promoting reading culture of primary school pupils. The table 2 above revealed that 170(70.8%) see teachers role model by reading aloud in teaching while 70(29.2%) don't experience that, 166 respondents with 69.2% are encouraged to read at home by teachers while 74(30.8%) are not, 160 (66.7%) see teachers use storytelling in teaching good morals while 80(33.3%) don't, 140(58.3%) perceived that reading is fun with teachers while 100(41.6%) don't see reading as fun and 177(73.8%) believe pupils are inspired by the teachers while 63(26.3%) do not perceived it that way.

**RQ 2:** How does storytelling influence pupils' interest and attitude towards reading?

**Table 3:** Effects of Storytelling on Respondents' Interest and Attitude towards Reading

| S/N | Statements                    | Yes (%)   | No (%)    |
|-----|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1.  | Enjoy reading story books     | 177(73.8) | 63(26.3)  |
| 2.  | Reading is boring             | 160(66.7) | 80(33.3)  |
| 3.  | Teachers encourage me to read | 140(58.3) | 100(41.6) |
| 4.  | Access to story books         | 90(37.5)  | 150(62.5) |
| 5.  | Reading helps me              | 166(69.2) | 74(30.8)  |

Table 3 shows the responses on how storytelling influence pupils' interest and attitude towards reading. The table revealed the responses on how storytelling influence pupils' interest and attitude towards reading. A total of 177(73.8%) enjoy reading story books, 160(66.7%) see reading as boring, 140(58.3%) are encouraged by their teachers, 90(37.5%) have access to interesting story books while 150(62.5%) do not have access to interesting story books, 166(69.2%) are help through reading while 74(30.8%) selected no.

**RQ 3:** What is the relationship between teachers as role models and pupils reading culture?

**Table 4:** Teachers as Role Models for the Respondents' Reading Culture

| S/N | Statements                        | Yes (%)   | No (%)   |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| 1.  | Pupils enjoy listening to stories | 150(62.5) | 90(37.5) |
| 2.  | Characters motivate the pupils    | 177(73.8) | 60(25.0) |
| 3.  | Pupils wish for good characters   | 200(83.3) | 40(16.7) |
| 4.  | Storytelling makes reading fun    | 180(75.0) | 60(25.0) |

Table 4 shows the responses on the effects of teacher's role modeling on pupils' attitude towards reading. The table revealed that 150(62.5%) enjoyed listening to stories while 90(37.5%) don't, 177(73.8%) are motivated by characters from story books while 60(25.0%) don't, 200(83.3%) wish to be of good character while 40(16.7%) don't and 180(75.0%) believe storytelling makes reading fun while 60(25.0%) do not see it that way.

**RQ 4:** What challenges do teachers encounter in using role modeling and storytelling to improve pupils reading culture?

**Table 5:** Challenges Teachers Encounter in Integrating Role Modeling and Storytelling to Improve Pupils' Reading Culture

| S/N | Statements                     | Yes (%) |
|-----|--------------------------------|---------|
| 1.  | Inadequate training            | 8(100)  |
| 2.  | Lack of reading materials      | 8(100)  |
| 3.  | Lack of motivation of teachers | 8(100)  |
| 4.  | Large class size               | 6(75.0) |
| 5.  | Language barrier               | 6(75.0) |

Table 5 shows the responses on the challenges teachers encounter in using role modeling and storytelling to improve pupils reading culture. From the table, the 8 teachers with 100% encounter lack of motivation, 6 teachers with 75% experience large class size, 8 teachers with 100% experience lack of interesting reading materials, 8 teachers with 100% experience inadequate training and 6 teachers with 75% encounter language barrier challenges, respectively.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The findings of this study revealed that teachers as role models adopted storytelling by reading aloud to the pupils and teaching good morals through storytelling. This outcome aligns with the findings of Bonds (2016), who reported that the best way to increase chances of learning is by asking the students to repeat after the teachers. Thus, repeating what the teachers say allow the pupils to be more engaged through participation. Similarly, this study revealed that reading is more fun with adults as role models. This aligns with Lynch (2021), Sturm *et al.* (2017), Ellis and Brewster (2014), Gregor (2010) who reported that when teachers act as storytellers they serve as role models demonstrating enthusiasm for reading and learning. Thereby making reading more fun with adults as role models. In other words, when teachers actively engage in storytelling by reading aloud, the children are more likely to develop a reading culture and positive attitudes towards learning.

In addition, this study revealed that teachers trying to embrace role modeling and storytelling to improve pupils reading culture encountered some challenges. These challenges ranges from teachers inadequate training on how to integrate storytelling method to teaching process, lack of interesting reading materials, large class size, language barrier and lack of motivation of teachers.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that role modeling and storytelling are powerful tools for strengthening reading culture in primary schools. Since it makes reading fun for the young learners. In conclusion, role modeling and storytelling significantly contribute to the development of a strong reading culture in primary schools. For pupils to cultivate lifelong reading habits, teachers must be empowered and encouraged to incorporate these two strategies effectively. The study therefore recommends greater investment in teacher training, the provision of adequate reading materials, and the integration of storytelling and reading-related activities into the school curriculum. Strengthening these areas will help create a vibrant literacy environment where pupils can thrive academically and develop a lasting love for reading.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Regular workshops and trainings should be organised for primary school teachers on how to integrate storytelling into the primary school curriculum to promote sustainable reading habits among pupils.
2. Government should improve access to interesting materials such as storybooks, picture book and many more.
3. There should be a manageable classroom size in all primary schools and government should help to employ class assistant.
4. Government should try to increase teachers take home so that the teachers can be able to motivate the pupils amicably.
5. There should be promotion of local literatures in order to solve problem of language barrier.

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