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**NEWSPAPER READERSHIP PATTERN OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY  
UNDERGRADUATES: A STUDY OF DEPARTMENT OF MASS  
COMMUNICATION, EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY ABAKALIKI.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated newspaper readership among Mass Communication students in the Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The research design adopted was a survey method; population frame was 1200 Mass Communication Students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki while the sample size was 291 selected via a stratified random method. It was discovered that there is low newspaper readership among the students. The student preferred general interest newspapers particularly Daily Trust and the Sun Newspapers. The manners in which the students access newspapers were majorly through borrowing and vendor stand-free-reading. The study also revealed that politics and sport are the major subjects of interest which the students often seek from newspaper while the problems militating against the newspaper readership among the students include lack of money, prevalent of online newspaper and poor supply of newspaper in the University library and the Department. Nigerian Universities should provide newspapers in the University library daily and create newspaper hub or stand within the department of mass communication to enable students to access newspapers and enhance their reading habit. This is because, reading newspaper informs readers as well as enhances the readers literacy skills. Therefore, the newspaper serves as a tool for learning, especially among communication students. However, newspaper readership among students in Nigeria has been an issue of concern due to some factors .*

**Keywords:** *communication, lack of money, newspaper, Nigeria, students*

**Introduction**

Reading is the heart of learning, especially in formal education settings like University system. Reading increases one's knowledge and thinking about a particular subject, and the society as a whole (Faizli, 2012). Onwubiko (2015) asserts that, reading has four intentions: reading for enjoyment and relaxation, reading for information, reading for knowledge and reading for all the above factors. He further asserts that there are various materials at the disposal of a reader; one of the major reading materials for reading is newspaper. Newspaper is a mass medium which conveys timely information issue at regular interval of time. As a mass medium, newspapers are useful for education, information, recreation, relaxation and entertainment. This explains why Ola and Ojo (2007) remark that newspapers are important because they carry current information and they keep the readers informed of events and happenings within and outside their immediate

environments. Also, Okunna (1999) reinforces this position by asserting that the newspaper is important in that it serves as a carrier of current information or news.

Moreso, Obaid (2014) concurs that newspapers are the textbooks that provide up to date information on local, state, national and world affairs, the most current analysis and criticism of the executive and legislative decision making, the latest in music, theatre, television, fine arts and even column and comics to make readers laugh. In addition, Babalola (2002) asserts that newspapers facilitate literacy empowerment; it inevitably promotes critical thinking, retention of information, problem solving and the querying of information source. Furthermore, newspaper readership enables one to become a person who possesses civic-conscious values, tolerance and closeness to the community (Igwe, 2011). The importance of newspaper, especially to students cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, students are supposed to be the most active users of newspapers. The permanency attributed to print media, including newspaper has made information recall possible, and recall capability free the content from becoming transient and ephemeral therefore, audience of the medium like students can use the content for academic and other purposes (Ezeh, Chukwuma & Enwereuzo et al., 2015). According to Onwubiko (2005), Newspaper is one of the most advantageous types of media especially for students. They described newspapers as "outside of the classroom teachers". This, according to them is due to the fact that newspapers are more formal and use standard forms of languages which will help students develop their language skills. They further argued that, Newspapers can provide useful information, including university admissions, jobs, and special inducements for the government that are very useful for students. Among all mass communication channels, Elmadwi (2014) observed that reading of newspaper articles is highly encouraged for students because through newspaper, students can enjoy a variety of reading and visual materials that will enhance learning.

### **Statement Of Problem**

Despite the significant place of newspaper readership in the life of students, evidence from a large body of empirical literature seems to suggest that newspaper reading among youths is declining. For instance, Dominick (2002) notes that newspaper readership has been declining over the last couple of years. Also, Udie (2002) reports that the frequency of newspaper readership among Nigerian students is less than 50%. Again, Biagi (2003) states that since the 1970s, the overall number of newspapers has declined due to non-readership. Business Essay (2009) has equally reported downward trend, in the past few decades, in newspaper readership in countries of the world including Europe and America. A survey conducted by Afro barometer in 12 African countries, including Nigeria, in 2003 indicates that only 13 per cent of the sampled population professes to read a daily newspaper (Afrobarometer, 2003). According to the 2010 study carried out by the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) across the country, the daily sales figure of all the newspapers was less than 300,000, meaning that only one in every 470 Nigerians buy newspapers daily (Ekeng, 2010). Putting this reality in proper perspective, Popoola (2010) said that all the newspapers in Nigeria today have combined circulation figure that is far less than 500,000 copies per day when compared to 1980 when the population of Nigeria was about half of what it is today.

There is no doubt that the conventional newspaper is passing through its hardest time ever, due to the emergence of the internet. The internet provides online functionalities and possibilities far beyond what the conventional newspaper could offer. For instance, the internet provides instant and less expensive access to news and information with interactive

and multimedia features as well as easy access through very simple handheld technologies like mobile phones and personal computers (Afrobarometer, 2007). Varian (2013) argued that the internet is a more superior way to distribute and read news and information. Rajendran and Thesinghraj (2014) aptly concur that, new media and the social media has posed a challenge to the printed newspaper. According to them, Readership habits seem to be changing as users turn to the internet for free news and information. The instant feature of the social media and the online news were one of the smart options for the consumers to accept it globally. This situation above, inadvertently threatens the conventional channels of mass communication, including newspaper in their traditional stronghold of the news business; thereby forcing them to tap into the internet's huge resources.

Today, newspapers joined other mass media to also deliver their contents digitally. But as readers rush to online content, it is possible that conventional print newspapers may suffer a decline in readership (Aliagan, 2011). There is growing evidence that shows high usage of online platforms as sources of news and information among college or university students around the world (Ani, 2010; Adekunmisi, Ajala, Iyoro, 2013, Shadrach & Abugu et al., 2019), thus, it is expedient to further test if such development has affected conventional newspaper readership among students. It is also clear that newspaper readership habit among audience determine the survival or otherwise of the conventional newspaper industry in Nigerian and many other countries. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to unravel newspaper readership among University students.

### **Aims and Objective of the Study**

The aim of this study is to ascertain newspaper readership among Mass Communication Students of Ebonyi State University. The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To ascertain the newspapers that mass communication students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki mostly read.
2. To determine how regular Mass Communication students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki read the newspapers.
3. To determine the ways through which Mass Communication students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki obtain the newspapers they read.
4. To find out the type of stories Mass Communication students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki mostly read on the newspaper.
5. To examine the factors militating against reading of newspaper among Mass Communication students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

### **Research Questions.**

1. Which newspaper does the mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki mostly read?
2. How regular does mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki read the newspaper?
3. What are the ways mass communication of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki obtain the newspapers they read?
4. What type of stories does mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki mostly read on the newspapers?
5. What are the factors that militate against reading of newspapers among mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki?

### **Significance of the study**

The results of this study will review the pattern of newspaper readership of mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki. It will show the way, how when why and why not the students reads the newspaper. It will help to find out which content of the newspaper the students prefers reading and then help newspaper organizations to package their newspapers so as to attract the attention of the students.

It will also help the newspaper organizations to know which contents of their newspapers they should retain or remove. The study will also point out some of the factors militating against newspaper reading among the students and how to tackle them.

### **Review of Related Literature Concept of Newspaper**

Some communication scholars attempted a definition of what a newspaper means. According to Sanderman et al. cited in Okunna and Omenugha, (2012) newspaper is an unbound printed publication issued at regular intervals which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures. In the same line Nwodu (2006) also describes Newspaper as a printed unbound paper that contains news about current political, economic, socio-cultural, educational, environmental, scientific-cum-technological and sundry affairs. (Okunna and Omenugha et al.,2012) simply define newspaper as "news-carrying paper" because the happenings contained in the newspaper are new and timely and therefore qualify as news.

The implication, however, is that a typical newspaper is unlike most publications that are bounded, newspapers are hardly bounded. Like every other print media mode, newspaper contents are usually permanent to the extent one can enjoy repeat exposure for as long as one is able to preserve a particular edition of a newspaper and that the newspaper covers a broad spectrum of interests ranging from politics, economics, socials, environmental, science, technology, and sundry subjects. Furthermore, the publication of a newspaper could be daily, weekly or bi-weekly (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012).

### **Concept of Readership**

The concept of readership is central to the newspaper. Readership is an abstract concept which captures the act of reading. The concept, though difficult to define, is usually associated with newspapers, magazines and all kinds of periodicals. Thus, readership is the number or type of people who read a particular newspaper, magazine (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010). Bottle PR, a UK based agency established in 2004, defines readership as "a general term that refers to the number of people reading a particular publication, including both the individual who purchased the publication and others who have read it (Bottle PR, 2011). Also, The Huntsville Time website (2011) defines readership as "the number of adults (18+) in a specified geographic area who "read or looked into the publication yesterday "(cited in Obaid, 2013). To read is to get ideas from printed or written materials. Reading is a way of acquiring knowledge. Oyeyemi (2005) observed that reading is a means of tapping knowledge from superior minds. Reading is a term used to refer to an interaction by which meaning encoded in visual stimuli by an author makes meaning in the mind of the reader. It involves the recognition of printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli for the recall or meaning through the intellectual manipulation of concepts already possessed by the reader. The resulting meanings are thereafter organized into thinking process according to the purpose adopted by the reader, such an organization leads to modified thought and or behaviour or else leads to a new behaviour which takes its place either in person or in social development.

From another perspective, reading is defined as the vocalization of words in a given passage and the process of giving meaning to materials. This definition refers to reading aloud, which beginners do quite often and enables teachers to detect and to correct errors spontaneously. Although, reading can be done aloud, but vocalization in the course of reading slows down reading pace. For reading to be effective, it should be done with a good speed. Reading speed is expressed in the number of character or words read per minute. Johnson (1999) observed that there are two types of reading, namely, reading aloud and silent reading. Reading aloud involves audible vocalization of what is being read and is good for young learners because it exposes error for timely corrective measure. Reading aloud is used for speech delivery in public gatherings, and is also the format for dictation and oral comprehensive tests. In silent reading, the reader reads in the inside of him. In other words, he does not vocalize what he reads. Wide reading imposes reading silently and this is necessary for developing the reading habit, effective reading and for a profound understanding of literate and technical tests.

### **State of Newspaper Readership**

Reports indicate that globally the newspaper is passing through its hardest time ever, especially since the Internet came to provide online functionalities and possibilities far beyond what the newspaper could offer: instant and free news, interactive and multimedia features, and easy accessibility through very simple handheld technologies like mobile phones and personal computers (Ashong & Henry, 2017). Literature is replete with materials which chronicle the monumental shifts in news consumption occasioned around the world. Examples include: "Murdoch Predicts Gloomy Future for Press" (Plunkett, 2005) "The Future of Newspapers: Who Killed the Newspaper?" (The Economist, 2006) "Goodbye to Newspapers?" (Baker, 2007), "Newspaper Circulation Continues to Decline Rapidly" (Perez-Pena, 2008), "Newspaper Closings Raise Fears about Industry" (Lieberman, 2009).

It is important to note that, many reports do not support the hypothesis that print media readership is going extinct. For instance, Ahlers (2006) uphold that the mass migration from printed newspapers to online sources of news is not supported by the facts. For Ahlers (2006) some migration from offline to online news consumption has occurred, but the change is not as dramatic as some sources claim and the impact on the printed newspapers is not as apocalyptic as the extent of implying the "death" of the printed newspaper. In the views of Ahlers (2006), the online news media acts as a complement rather than as a substitute. Also Salman et al. (2011) noted that Malaysian newspapers still attract advertising dollars even with the presence of online newspapers. What this implies is that, there is still some level of newspaper readership around the world, despite the outcry that online media is displacing print media.

### **Ebonyi State University Mass Communication students Exposure to Newspaper**

Exposure to newspaper among young Nigerians is said to be low. This is more so among students in tertiary institutions like Universities in the country (Abdulraheem, Adisa and La'aro, 2012). And, Alianga (2011) opines that Nigerian university students today do give much attention to newspaper. According to him students, mostly access newspaper when they have a pressing need which can be assigned or vital information said to be available in a particular edition. Cooper (2009) argues that newspaper readership is in its worst state as readers are massively shifting to online sources. Ashog and Henry (2013) concur that the emerging realities in the media business, especially the newspaper, show that the paradigm is shifting. With the coming of the online newspaper, the print newspaper seems to be losing its hegemony as more readers appear to go online. Furthermore, Daily Trust (2012) reported that newspaper vendors across Nigeria are complaining about drop in newspaper

readership among Nigerians especially young college students. According to the report, these days college students do not fancy buying and reading the newspaper. The National Population Commission of Nigeria cited in Aliagan (2011) also does not report that most Nigerians buy nor have access to newspapers, while newspaper readership is generally low in all zones in the country. Cheney, Knapp, Alan, and Czapla (2006) specifically states that, there is a poor attitude to newspaper readership among students in tertiary institutions due to the growing presence of news on the Internet, radio, television, etc., however, they posit that conventional newspaper can continue to play a vital role in the academic community. They advocate that, in order to improve newspaper readership among college-age students, libraries should provide free and unhindered access to newspapers to all library users.

### **Regularity of Nigerian students Newspaper Readership**

Extant literature regarding the regularity of newspaper readership among Nigeria students has shown that most Nigeria students read newspaper occasionally. For instance, Igbeka and Ola (2009) explained that in most schools' libraries, newspaper section is hardly visited by students. They opined that students come around newspaper section only if there is urgent assignment which necessitates them to read or photocopy some section of the newspaper. Moreso, Aliagan (2011) adds that the regularity of newspaper in Nigeria schools though very poor but it varies between age and course of students among students. He adds that older students between age 35 above are likely to access newspaper more regularly than younger students, he also opined that students of communication, journalism and languages are likely to access and read newspaper more frequently than other students especially science students.

In the same vein, Udie (2002, p. 100) also reports that the frequency of newspaper readership among Nigerian students is less than 50%. Similarly, Biagi (2003, p. 83) states that since the 1970s, the overall number of newspapers has declined due to non-readership. This phenomenon is not only in Nigeria but globally, Business Essay (2009) reported downward trend, in the past few decades, in newspaper readership in countries of the world including Europe and America. The report shows that young people rarely read newspapers. A number of studies have reported some differences between male and female students and their habits of reading (Uusen & Muursepp, 2012). The studies show that male students are likely to read newspapers more than female students.

### **Newspaper Content Preference among Nigerian Students**

Ashong and Henry (2017) explained that newspaper readership is determined by content preference. This implies that the newspaper that lacks the ability to meet the information need of its target customers stands the risks of losing such readers. It is believed that content preferences varies among readers. Some readers enjoy sport stories while others go for politics, celebrity, gossip, health and many others. As posited by the Uses and Gratification Theory, audiences make use of the media to meet certain need rather than remain passive to media selection (McQuail, 2004), based on this, scholars often seek to determine the gratification different group of people seek from giving medium. In respect to students' preferences of newspaper contents, there seems to be consensus among scholars that the most preferred newspaper content among college students is politics, sport and entertainment. Similarly, Aliagan (2011) posits that though newspaper readership is drastically low among students, the few who exposed to the medium do so to access politics, entertainment and sport information. However, Eamin and Haque (2013) show that female students who access print media like newspaper are more interested in fashion styles. This implies that,

newspaper stories preferences of students are majorly influence by their desire for entertainment and fashion sense rather than any educational purpose.

### **Ways Nigerian students Access Newspaper**

Access to newspaper is diverse. Newspapers can be access through direct purchase from road side vendors, monthly subscription such that it can be delivered to one's house or office on regular basis and it can be made available in public offices and hostels and libraries. It is important to state here that, with development in new media, which led to the development of online newspaper, newspaper readers access content directly through their Smartphone (Talabi, 2016). However, the focus of this study is not online newspaper, but a conventional hardcopy newspaper.

Reports indicated that the major means by which students' access conventional newspaper is through direct purchase and use of the library (Ashong & Henry, 2017). They further revealed that though, there is a poor attitude among students toward accessing newspaper, the libraries over the years have continued to play significant role in providing newspaper for students and the university community. Layefa, Johnson and Taiwo (2016) avers that h pattern of newspaper access among most people, especially young adults in college is "borrowing" and free reading groups, they opined that, young newspaper readers struggled to comment their resources toward the purchase of a newspaper. They preferred to borrow it for a few minutes and then return it or patronize their free reading groups close to them.

### **Challenges against Newspaper Readership among Nigerian Students**

Newspaper readership generally is faced with some challenges; however, as it relates to this study, which is on students' newspaper reading culture, there are certain unique challenges that militate against students' newspaper reading culture. According to Talabi (2016) students' newspaper reading habit is limited by excessive use of new media technologies like Smartphone in which the students use to access online stories free of charge as well as spend time in social media. Ashong and Henry (2017) adds that, newspaper is not fanciful in the sight of the student considering the flexibility new media technologies and the convergence process which enables a students' o access all newspapers on one device are low cost.

In his submission, Aliagan (2011) link poor newspaper reading to socio-economic factor. He posits that, each edition of a newspaper cost Two Hundred Naira (N200) this means every week a student is expected to dedicate at least One Thousand Naira (N1, 000) to have a week's editions of just one brand of newspaper. This, according to him is not realistic considering the poor economic condition plighting Nigerians today. Another challenge militates against students' access to newspaper is a poor supply of newspaper in most universities' libraries. According Salaam (2002), consistent supply of newspaper in most libraries in Nigeria is lacking due to issues of under-funding. The problem is more so in schools or universities in Nigeria where there has always by issue of poor funding. In this case, the management might not be able to provide a newspaper for students' readership consistently.

### **Empirical Studies**

Many researchers have undertaken to study newspaper readership among different audiences and in several societies. The works of some of these scholars are reviewed. A Latin American Kids study (1998) on newspaper readership among Latin American Kids reported that only 20.8% of Latin American Kids between the age brackets 7-11 years read a week day newspaper and 18.1% read a Sunday newspaper. From the foregoing, there is strong



research-based evidence of declining newspaper readership among people of different ages. There are also enough empirical data showing that youths do not read newspapers. However, at present newspapers are available in both hard copy and electronic form and are accessible through the Internet using all kinds of devices which are at the disposal of youths, particularly students. All these innovations are meant to improve readership of newspapers and attract young readers.

Similarly, Amankwah, Adwoa Sikayena (2010) in their study of the newspaper readership habits of the residents of the Adenta Flats, Adenta, Accra examines particular newspapers residents read as well as the subject items that they considered most important in a newspaper. It also looked at the factors that influenced newspaper reading as well as which newspapers respondents considered credible and those they regarded as not credible. Credibility was matched against the level of readership of the selected newspapers to determine whether there was a correlation between the two variables. The results indicate that most respondents bought the newspapers they read or accessed them through supplies at work, from public libraries, universities and colleges, co-tenant and friends because primarily, they considered them informative and credible sources of information. It was obvious from the study that respondent buy more of newspapers they consider credible and less of those considered not credible. The study also discovered that physical features such as headlines, well written stories as well as even newspaper review programmes boosted newspaper reading.

In another study, Aliagan (2011) investigated the pattern of newspaper readership in Ilorin metropolis using 150 respondents in a survey. The study revealed that an average of 4,800 newspapers is sold in Ilorin on daily basis, with some newspapers selling as low as 80 copies. This is a poor showing for a city of half a million people. This revelation confirms the general appraisal on low newspaper patronage and readership in the country. The study identified poor economic background of most people as a challenge to newspaper patronage in Ilorin. In addition, the reason for low newspaper patronage was also being attributed to shallow reports of activities in the metropolis. Majority of the newspapers devote their pages on reporting the rest of the nation to the metropolis and have scanty reports about the local readers and their activities.

Likewise, Akanda and Haque (2013) surveyed newspaper reading habits of the graduate students of Social Science faculty of University of Rajshahi in Bangladesh. The study demonstrates that the majority of the graduate students read Bengali and English newspapers. Moreover, the research reveals that international section of the newspaper is the most preferred section. This paper also highlights that a majority portion of respondents prefer hall library to read printed newspaper while a large number of them prefer computer center of the university central library to read online newspapers. The study also highlights the barriers and attempts to provide the suggestions to overcome the hurdles of reading both printed and online newspapers. This study shows a positive attitude to newspaper readership among students in Bangladesh, such might not be the case in other places in Nigeria like Ebonyi State.

Consistent with the above findings, Edegoh, Ezehand Samson (2015) examines newspaper reading habits of youths in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study uses quantitative research technique. It adopts a sample size of 300 youths, purposefully drawn from Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi. The survey is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory of the mass media. The paper employs the simple percentage method and frequency

tables as analytical tools. Findings of the study show that youths in Anambra State read newspapers a lot and that *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Complete Sports* and *The Vanguard* are the newspapers they mostly read. Findings also reveal that sports, political and economic news, are the major stories the youths read and that they obtain the newspapers they read mainly by going to newspaper stands (to read without paying) browsing newspapers with their cell phones, borrowing from friends and neighbours and by visiting the public library.

In a more recent study, Isyaku and Azmi (2018) investigated the extent of readership preferences for both print and online newspapers in northwestern Nigeria. Daily Trust, being the largest circulating newspaper in the study area was selected for case study. The study employed quantitative approach, in which descriptive survey method was used to gather and analyse data from print and newspaper readers in the study area. Structured questionnaire was used as a data - gathering instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 330 newspaper readers using simple random sampling. The findings revealed a moderate (Mean=3.38) readers' preference for the online version of the newspaper to its print counterpart. Further analysis of the findings revealed that the majority of the readers (Mean=3.49) find themselves reading less print copy of the newspaper because they have access to the free online versions. The majority of the readers (Mean=3.37) will continue to read the print version, despite the availability of its free online counterpart. Also, the majority of the readers (Mean=3.08) spend less time reading the print copy of the newspaper due to the availability of its online versions. Meanwhile, the majority of the readers (Mean=3.51) are confident that the newspaper will continue to survive despite the availability of its free online versions. This shows that there is a decline in newspaper readership in the study area.

### **Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratification Theory**

Uses and Gratification theory was first theorized and tested in Elihu Katz's article in 1959. The theory proposed two inferences about audiences of media. First, audiences are active in the selection of media and their messages. Second, audiences are mindful of their reasons for choice of a particular medium vis-a-vis both information and entertainment. They consider these reasons as they ardently search for media messages for information needs and gratification. Therefore, not only the content defines media preferences, but also audience's characteristics and their relationship with the media content.

According to Potter (2012), the basic tenets of Uses and Gratification theory formed five claims: 1) communication behaviour is purposive, motivated and goal directed; 2) individuals initiate the choice and usage of communication medium; 3) communication behaviour is mediated or guided by a host of psychological and social factors; 4) in the gratification of needs, the media contend with other forms of communication; 5) people are naturally more powerful than the media in the course of effects. The Uses and Gratifications theory has been applied as an approach in many communication studies to understand the relationship between audiences and their media choice (Lucena, 2011). One criticism of the uses and gratifications approach is that the audience is not always as active as was once originally thought, a valid view of audience behaviour lies between the extremes of being passive and expected to be influenced by the communicated messages and being active and expected to make decisions about what media content to accept and reject (Rubin, 1993). Again, McQuail (2007) believes that the theory suffers from lack of theoretical coherence. He thinks that some of the theory's terminology need to be further defined. He notes that the theory relies too heavily on the functional use of the media, because there are times when the media can be reckless. Regardless, these criticisms, uses and gratification theory have some practical in explaining media choice among the audience.

The Uses and Gratification theory is relevant to the study in that it will help in explaining the newspaper and content choice of students as well as help to explain the benefits or gratification the students seek from newspaper and various content. In a general sense the theory will help to explain the fact that, students are passive in their media selection and the factors that influence their choices as they select media (newspaper) of their choice

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted descriptive quantitative survey approach. Survey design is a technique that entails gathering data about opinions, attitude and behavior from portion of a population as the representative of the population (Asika, 2004). Baran and Davis (2004) explained that, survey method is preferable when the population under study is too large for a researcher to realistically study.

### **Study Area**

The study was conducted in Department of Mass Communication Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

### **Population of Study.**

The population of this study was Mass communication students. The students are considered more appropriate for this study based on the fact that their course of study in requires that they read newspaper, hence investigating their newspaper readership pattern became very important.

### **Sample Size and Techniques**

The sample size for this study is 291 respondents. This sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan sampling Table. According to the Table, a sample of 291 is valid enough to represents a population of 1200. Thus, since the population of this study was 1200, the recommended sample size (291) was considered appropriate. In this work, the researchers adopt stratified and random sampling methods. The population was stratified into four strata based on levels (1-4). In each level a number of respondents were allocated proportionally. The essence is to ensure representation of all levels according to their numerical strength. After the allocation, random sampling method was employed to select respondents. This is so in order to eliminate any form of bias in selecting respondents.

### **Research Instrument**

In this study questionnaire was adopted as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire for this study was closed-ended format and had two parts; the first seeks the respondents' demographic data while the second part seeks to evaluate the respondents' newspaper reading pattern. The instrument (questionnaire) used was given to two experts. They were requested to evaluate and appraise the questionnaire regarding content accuracy, clarity, length, and overall presentation.

### **Method of Data Collection and analysis**

The primary data in this study was obtained through administration of a structured questionnaire. The study adopted descriptive statistical method of data analysis. Simple percentages and frequencies were used in the analysis while tables and charts were used in presenting the data before discussion of the findings was made toward answering the research questions.

DEMOGRPHIC DATA OF THE STUDY POPULATION (n=288)

TABLE 1: GENDER

VARIABLES	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE (%)
MALE	167	58.2
FEMALE	121	42.8

The table above shows that 58% which represents 167 respondents are male while 42% representing 121 respondents are female. This shows that majority of the respondents are male.

TABLE 2: AGE

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
16-20	173	60
21-30	115	40

This table shows that majority of the respondents are between the ages-of 16-20 with 70% of the respondents while the 30% are between the ages of 21-30. This means that majority of the respondents are between the ages of 16-20.

TABLES: CLASS

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
100	36	12.6
200	55	18.8
300	98	33.9
400	99	34.2

The table above shows that majority of the respondents are in 400 level with 34% of the respondents. 33.9% are in 300 level, 18.8% are in 200 level while 12.6% are in 100 level.

SECTION B.

TABLE 4: HOW DO YOU READ NEWSPAPER?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
FREQUENTLY	13	4.6
ONCE IN A WHILE	239	82.8
RARELY	36	12.6
NOT AT ALL	0	0

This table above shows that 4.6% of the respondents representing 13 students read newspaper frequently, 82.8% which represents 241 respondents read newspaper once in a while, while 12.6% representing 37 respondents rarely read newspaper. therefore, majority of the respondents read newspapers once in a while.

TABLE 5: HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU THINK YOU OFTEN SPEND ON NEWSPAPER?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
LESS THAN 30MINS	156	54
ABOUT AN HOUR	132	46
ABOVE AN HOUR	0	0

The table above shows that 156 respondents which is 54% read newspapers for less than 30 minutes, 132 respondents which is 46% read newspaper for about an hour while none of the respondents read newspaper for more than an hour. This means that majority of the respondents read newspaper for less than an hour.

TABLE 6: DO YOU OFTEN USE YOUR MONEY TO BUY THE NEWSPAPER?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	14	5
NO	274	95
CAN'T SAY	0	0

The table above shows that 5% of the respondents buy the newspapers they read with their money while 95% of the respondents do not buy newspapers.

TABLE 7: DO YOU ACCESS NEWSPAPER FROM SCHOOL?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	0	0
NO	288	100
CAN'T SAY	0	0

The table above shows that non of the respondents access newspaper in the school library.

TABLE 8: DO YOU BORROW FROM PEOPLE?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	207	72

This table shows that majority of the respondents borrow newspapers from people to read.72% of the respondents borrow newspapers from people while 28% of the respondents do not borrow the newspapers they read.

NO	81	28
CANT	0	0

TABLE 9: DO YOU VISIT VENDORS STAND JUST TO READ NEWSPAPER?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	23	7.9
NO	265	98.1

The table above shows that 23% respondents visit the vendor stand to read newspaper.

**TABLE 10: WHICH FORM OF NEWSPAPER DO YOU PREFER MOST?**

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
GENERAL INTEREST	288	100
SPECIAL INTEREST	0	0

This table shows here that all the respondents prefer general interest newspaper

**TABLE 11: WHICH OF THE NEWSPAPERS DO YOU PREFER?**

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
DAILY TRUST	88	30.1
THE SUN	75	25.9
GUARDIAN	27	9.6
VANGUARD	6	2.1
THIS DAY	13	4.6
OTHERS	79	27.6

The table above shows that 30.1% of the respondents prefers daily trust newspaper,25.9%.9.6% prefer guardian,2.1% prefer this day newspaper while 27.6% prefer other newspaper. Therefore, majority of the respondents prefer daily trust newspaper.



**TABLE 12: WHICH TOPIC DO YOU PREFER?**

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
POLITICS	131	45.6
SPORTS	27	9.5
FASHION	118	41
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	0	0
HEALTH	2	0.8
EDUCATION	7	2.7
OTHERS	0	0

This table shows that 45.6% of the respondents prefer politics,9.5% prefer sports,41% fashion,0.8% prefer education. Therefore, majority of the respondents prefer politics in newspaper.

**TABLE 13: DO YOU THINK LACK OF MONEY DISCOURAGES YOU FROM BUYING AND READING NEWSPAPER?**

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	242	84
NO	46	16
CAN'T SAY	0	0

This table shows that 84% of the respondents are discouraged from buying and reading newspapers because of lack of money while 16% are not discouraged because of lack money. Therefore, majority of the responsible do not read newspaper because of money.

**TABLE 14: DO YOU THINK POOR SUPPLY OF NEWSPAPER IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AND THE DEPARTMENT DISCOURAGE YOU FROM RENDERING NEWSPAPER?**

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	288	100
NO	0	0

This table shows that poor supply of newspaper in the school library and the department discourages the respondents from reading the newspaper. Here all the respondents were

of the opinion the poor supply of newspaper to the school library and department library contributes to them not reading the newspaper.

TABLE 15: DO YOU THINK CONTENTS OF MOST HARDCOPY NEWSPAPER ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR NEWSPAPER READING HABIT AMONG STUDENTS?

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	140	48.5
NO	122	42.3
CANT SAY	26	9.2

The table above shows that,48.5% of the respondents believes that the contents of the . newspaper hardcopy affects their newspaper reading habit,42.35% believes that it doesn't affect their newspaper reading habit while 9.2% are undecided

### Discussions of Findings

Reading newspaper informs readers as well as enhances the readers literacy skills. The newspaper serves as a tool for learning, especially among communication student. However, the results of the study the newspaper readership pattern of mass communication student of Ebonyi State university. The study shows how the students read, and how they read their newspaper The result of this study shows that the type of newspaper based on contents which the students preferred the most is the generalized newspaper which carries different subjects. Furthermore, among the plethora of newspapers in Nigeria, the study identified *Daily Trust* and the *Sun* Newspaper as the most preferred newspaper among the students. The findings support the assertion of Jibril (2015) which holds that *Daily Trust* and the *Sun* newspaper are among the top read newspapers in the country. He added that the newspapers have over the years enjoyed massive followership among young and adult readers across the nation.

The study also revealed poor newspaper readership among the students. Majority (82.8%) of the students indicated that they read only newspaper occasionally and that they only spent less than an hour on newspaper. This finding opposed the postulation by Babalola (2002) who opined that newspapers are the most sought written documents to the largest proportion of people of all categories, young and old, students and workers. He further asserts that due to the way people gather daily to discuss contents of newspapers, it inevitably promotes critical thinking, retention of information, problem solving and the querying of information source.

On the type of subject or stories preferred by most students, the study revealed that politics and sport stories are majorly followed by students. The findings concur with the assertion by Eamin and Haque (2013) who asserts that newspapers are collection of diverse contents ranging from politics, health, fashion, celebrities among others and that the readers choices diverse based on age and needs, however, they agree that politics have

become one of the most preferred content readers both young and adult consume.

Finally, the study revealed some barriers that pose great challenge to newspaper readership among the students. These include poor economic status of the students, prevalent online news and lack of provision of newspaper in the University library. The findings contrast Abdulraheem et al. (2012). They opine that although the new media now provide various platforms of communicating, a lot of Nigerians are not sophisticated enough to take full advantage of the new technology. Furthermore, Talabi (2014) shares similar sentiments thus: "Looking at the digital divide, everyone is not online-compliant. Not everyone is connected, and among those who are, there are vastly different skill levels. Some people are clearly less comfortable with this new technology than others, so this has to be acknowledged and respected - this does not simply relegate people who are not Internet adept as a new breed of slow learners. Notwithstanding, hardcopy still has its place in news gathering". However, the finding in the area of cost of a newspaper is in consonance with Salaam (2002) who posits that the cover price of Nigerian newspapers was 20 Kobo per copy in the 1980s, thus the average Nigerian was able to purchase a minimum of three newspapers per day.

The result of the study is also in agreement with Afrobarometer (2007) reports which indicate that globally the newspaper is passing through its hardest time ever, especially since the Internet came to provide online functionalities and possibilities far beyond what the newspaper could offer instant and free news, interactive and multimedia features, and easy accessibility through very simple handheld technologies like mobile phones and personal computers.

### **Summary.**

Reading newspaper informs readers as well as enables the readers literacy skills. Therefore, the newspaper serves as a tool for learning, especially among communication students. This study had five objectives aimed at determining the pattern of newspaper readership of mass communication students of Ebonyi state university. This objectives are; To ascertain the newspaper that mass communication students of Ebonyi state university read most, to determine how regular mass communication student of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki read the newspaper, to determine the way through which mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki obtain the newspapers they read, to find out the .type of stories mass communication students of Ebonyi state university Abakaliki mostly read on newspaper and lastly, to examine the factors militating against reading of newspaper among mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki. The findings of this study are relevant because it showed that there is low newspaper readership among the mass communication students of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki and helped to find out the factors militating against newspaper readership among the students. Furthermore, the study also brought out some recommendation to tackle those factors militating against newspaper readership among mass communication students of Ebonyi state university Abakaliki. The research adopted survey method; its population frame was 1200 mass communication students of Ebonyi state university Abakaliki; sample size was 291 which was selected through a stratified random method, the study used a structured questionnaire which was distributed to 291 students, 288 questionnaires were recovered.

### **Conclusion.**

With the conduction of this study and having analysed all the data collected, the newspaper readership pattern of mass communication students of Ebonyi state university was

discovered, the manner of which students read newspaper was ascertained. The study basically sought to find the type of newspaper the students preferred, the extent the students read their most preferred newspapers and the manner in which they access the papers. Furthermore, the study looked at the subject of interest which the students sought from newspapers as well as the challenges militating against newspaper readership among the students. It was discovered that there is low newspaper readership among the students. The student preferred general interest newspapers in particular *Daily Trust* and the *Sun* Newspapers, however, the extent the students read the newspaper is occasionally or once in a while. Furthermore, the work found that the manner in which the few students access papers include through borrowing and vendor stand-free-reading. A very minute portion of the respondents purchase newspaper with their money.

In addition, the study revealed that politics and sport are the major subjects of interest which the students often seek from newspaper readership. The study further identified problems militating against newspaper readership among the students and these problems include lack of money, prevalent of online newspaper and poor supply of newspaper in the University library and the Department.

The findings of this study as seen above support the assertion of the Uses and Gratification Theory, which served as the theoretical framework of this study. According to the theory, audience of Mass media are very active they deliberately select and exposed themselves only to media channels that would provide certain gratification or reward such as information reward, leisure or entertainment among others. Apt to this study is the fact that hardcopy newspaper is not receiving significant attention due to the fact that the medium has not lack capacity to provide needed gratifications to the students in the manner that they would be motivated to access and read the papers despite all challenges.

Newspaper is a viable tool for the dissemination of information, enlightenment and shaping of public opinion and so its readership important and educative to students. This study established that there is low newspaper readership among Mass communication students, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Most of the students read newspaper occasionally which might be related to issues of assignment common to Mass Communication studies. This attitude to newspaper readership might deny the student's privilege to useful information contain in various newspapers as well as the opportunity of learning to see that newspaper on their own enhance students' reading and comprehension skills. As Mass Communication students, the need to read the newspaper is high, this is because the act would significantly help student improve their writing skills as well as get informed with news and current happenings in the society. However, the current status of newspaper readership in Ebonyi State University and in particular among Mass Communication students is worrisome and which need serious attention by all stakeholders in the department and the University as a whole

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. The Management of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki should provide daily newspapers in the University libraries to enable willing students and other readers gain access.
2. Similarly, the department of Mass communication should collaborate with the National Association Of Mass Communication Students (NAMCS) to create newspaper hub

- or stand within the department in which students can have access to the papers.
3. The department can also establish a resource centre in which several contents, including newspapers can be kept for references and research purposes.
  4. Leading newspapers like *Daily Trust* and the *Sun* which are the most preferred among the students should establish a newspaper stand in the university in which the students can have access to the papers on daily business at subsidized rate.
  5. The students of the department should be encouraged to form newspaper reading club in which members would be contributing less among weekly to provide newspapers for the club members at others who care for newspapers.
  6. The students should also sensitize on the importance of reading read hardcopy newspapers despite the prevalent of online newspapers.

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