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UTILIZATION OF ONLINE LEARNING SYSTEM FOR ENHANCEMENT OF STORY HOUR'S PROGRAMME OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study determined the use of online learning system for enhancement of story hour's programme of Public Libraries in South East Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The entire populations of 91 was used for the study. Questionnaire were used to generate data for the study. Data collected for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistic of mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study show that use of video conferencing platform and virtual reality storytelling significantly enhances story hour programmes in public libraries within the region. Based on the findings, the implications of the study were highlighted. Digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams have expanded the scope of library services beyond physical spaces. Virtual Reality provides immersive, interactive environments that transform passive listening into experiential learning. The study recommends that libraries should formally integrate digital platforms into their service frameworks to ensure consistent and sustainable access to virtual programmes, workshops, and consultations. Also, institutions should adopt Virtual Reality (VR) as a pedagogical tool within library and classroom settings to foster experiential learning.

Keywords: Online learning system, Story hour, Public library.

Introduction

A library offers us education, relaxation and access to all sorts of books, magazines, music and movies that we could not afford to buy. It is a safe place to meet friends, use the internet or get help with school assignments. People of walks of life may be present, including children, youth, and the aged. Public library as one of the types of libraries is a library that is open to the general public, providing a variety of resources and programs for people of all ages. Public Libraries play an important role in ensuring that members of the public have access to knowledge and information and also an important place for people to gather and socialize. They provide a space for people to meet and interact, and they offer a variety of programs and events that bring people together. It plays an important role in supporting education and literacy and has a good selection of books that people will want to read.

A story hour programme is a designated time or session during which stories are narrated to children, particularly as a structured event within a library (Ifla, 2022). It is a special programme organized for children in the public library and it is an interactive learning opportunity where kids of all ages enjoy stories, rhymes, songs and fun with the children's librarian, library

officers and community storytellers. This is also where people bring in their children to play with toys, share books, socialize, and join in engaging, educational activities that help kids grow. Story times are interactive learning opportunities where kids of all ages enjoy stories, rhymes, songs and fun with our children's librarian and community storytellers Hughes, and Santoro, (Eds.) (2020). Story hour programme is an introduction to books, stories, and language. According to Billing Public Library (BPL, 2021) Story hour introduces children to books, rhymes and rhythm, music and song, crafts, puppets, flannel board stories, taking turns, paying attention, and other fun interactive activities designed around a theme.

Each Story hour is a chance to practice reading readiness skills like listening during stories, letter awareness and predicting. It is also an early experience in social interaction with other children and with adults other than parents. Each session is typically 25 to 30 minutes in length to accommodate attention span and developmental levels. All story hours are different, and the babies and the toddlers will generally spend more time singing, dancing, and bouncing (John County Public Library (JCPL, 2024). According to Rancho, (2020) Story hour is variety of free and fun educational experiences for all ages, it is a great way for librarians, library officers and families to learn about best practices in early literacy, to encourage early learning in a child's life, and continue the learning at home. Library storytellers model the five best practices of early literacy: they are; Talk, Sing, Read, Write, and Play.

In the past, story hour sessions typically took place face-to-face, with librarians and library officers interacting directly with their audience. However, the rise of digital technologies has made it possible to offer these services from a distance. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many libraries to turn to online platforms to maintain their goals, mission and objectives. Story hour are therefore a crucial part of reading and literacy programmes in libraries and beyond, supporting language development, vocabulary acquisition and knowledge of the alphabet and other basic language forms, but also to lifelong learning and patrons' engagement with and support for libraries (Charles County Public Library CCPL, 2019). The objective of story hour is to develop a love of reading, a desire to learn to read, and to make full use of the varied collections of libraries. By prioritizing reading as a fundamental part of the daily routine, daycare centers not only equip children with the tools they need to succeed academically, but also foster curiosity and a lifelong love for learning that knows no bounds (Foundations, 2024). Rather than depending solely on conventional spoken language or written text, the incorporation of online learning system elements aims to enhance the story, making it more captivating, interactive, and dynamic.

Online story hour is a creative process that mixes conventional storytelling with digital technology, including a computer, video camera, and sound recorder (Ohler, 2013). It is a modern pedagogical initiative that has arisen from the proliferation of digital technology (Wang and Zhan, 2010). Research has shown that children who participate in story hour have a better vocabulary, improved literacy skills and enhanced social interactions. Allowing story hour to take place online is simply a continuation of the mission of libraries in a digital environment, opening up possibilities not just to serve existing users in times of lockdown, but also to reach previously under-served groups, (Ifla, 2022). For

example, families who are unable to travel to library buildings or who are unable to bring their children at specific time slots can benefit in particular from an online story hour program. Families that include children with disabilities can also have enormous benefits from online story hour.

Online learning system, sometimes called distance learning, refers to educational programs conducted via the internet. Online learning system or e- learning system is a computer-bases system that is used to deliver educational content to students through the internet. According to Malmstrom (2023) an electronic learning system or online learning system means a cohesive online platform or software that gives teachers, managers, trainers, and learners alike a set of interactive features to help with the e-learning management, delivery, and receipt of learning content. Because of its accessibility and versatility, this e-learning system is highly compatible with the learning and training approaches of different work industries. Creating an online learning system for a story hour involves incorporating various elements to make the experience engaging and effective. Here are several types of online learning systems or tools that can be utilized for a story hour: Video conferencing platforms and Virtual reality (VR) storytelling.

Video conferencing platforms in a story hour program refer to online tools and services that enable live, interactive communication through video and audio between a storyteller or educator and the children participating in the program. These platforms have become increasingly popular for conducting virtual story hours, especially in situations where in-person gatherings may not be feasible. Popular video conferencing platforms used for virtual story hours may include Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and other similar services (AI-Samarraie, 2019). Overall, leveraging video conferencing platforms in a story hour program allows for the continuation of educational and storytelling activities in a virtual setting, providing a flexible and accessible learning environment for children. According to Kirvan, Chai and Lazar (2025) virtual reality storytelling is a live, visual connection between two or more remote parties over the internet that simulates a face-to-face meeting.

It is important because it joints people who would not normally be able to form a face-to-face connection. Video conferencing platform relate to the story hour programs by allowing the story teller to connect with children from anywhere in the world, and they allow children to participate in the story hour from the comfort of their own homes. This can be especially useful for children who are unable to attend story hour in person, such as children who are sick or who live in remote areas. It also allows for the use of interactive features, such as virtual backgrounds and screen sharing. Another essential type of online learning system comes in the form of virtual reality storytelling where children can be immersed in the world of a story. Another essential type of online learning system comes in the form of virtual reality storytelling were children can be immersed in the world of a story,

Virtual reality (VR) storytelling in children's programs involves using virtual reality technology to create immersive and interactive storytelling experiences for young audiences (Vallance and Towndrow, 2022). Instead of traditional methods of reading or watching stories on a screen, VR storytelling transports children into a virtual world where they can actively engage

with the narrative. It is also a cutting-edge approach that aims to leverage technology to create memorable and engaging narratives, and equally offers a unique way for children to interact with stories, fostering creativity and curiosity in a virtual environment. For a more immersive experience, virtual reality can be used to create virtual story hours; participants can join from different locations and feel like they are in the same space. Virtual reality story telling relate to story hour programs because it is a type of technology that allows users to experience a simulated environment, which can be powerful tool for storytelling. For example, with virtual reality, children can be immersed in the world of a story, which can make the story more vivid and real for them. They can also interact with characters and objects in the story, making it a truly immersive experience. Moreover, another essential type of online learning system comes in the form of online story library where children can access stories from the library on their own time.

Statement of the problem

Story hour is an incredibly important part of early childhood development. It exposes children to new stories, and concepts which help to improve their language skills. It equally gives a child a chance to explore a world where just about anything is possible and also increases a child's attention span. Story hour sessions stand as an essential feature of public libraries, serving as a fundamental element in initiatives aimed at promoting early childhood literacy and fostering community involvement. Additionally, online learning system have been argued to have the potential to enhance the storytelling session and foster literacy. Despite the availability of story hour programme in the public library it seems the current system of story hour in public libraries is not engaging and retaining participants. Many factors such as short attention span, declining attendance rates, lack of diversity in content, boring due to non-use of visuals, insufficient marketing strategies, or inadequate instructional resources of storytelling may have contributed to these issues. This may also be due to inability to utilize or non-utilization of multimedia and online learning system to enhance story hours. Using these resources during story hours will go a long way in engaging and retaining the children.

It is also believed that online learning system can also offer valuable resources and interactive experiences which helps to retain the attention of the children. This assumption has not been empirically proven to the best of researcher's knowledge. Also, in public libraries in south east, Nigeria, there is little or no empirical works to show the utilization of multimedia for enhancement of story hour's programme of public libraries. This has created a gap in literature in this study area and it is on this note that this study was initiated.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the use of online learning system for enhancement of story hour's program of Public Libraries in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Ascertain the use of video conferencing platform in enhancing story hour programme of Public Libraries in southeast Nigeria

2. Examine the use of virtual reality storytelling in enhancing story hour

programme of Public Libraries in southeast Nigeria

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the use of video conferencing platform enhancing story hour programme of Public Libraries in South East Nigeria?

2. What is the use of virtual reality storytelling enhancing story hour programme of Public Libraries in South East Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in South-east, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 91 librarians and library officers in public libraries in South-east, Nigeria. The public libraries are Abia State Library, Anambra State Library, Ebonyi State Library, Enugu State Library, and Imo State Library. The entire population of 91 librarians and library officers was studied as the number is manageable. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire has two sections designed to address the two research questions that guided the study. It contained twenty items. All the items in the questionnaire were structured on four-point rating scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SA). Drafted copies of the questionnaire were validated by two lecturers in the Department of Library and Information Science, and one lecturer in Education foundation and Evaluation unit all in Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their comments were used to improve the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using cronbach Alpha coefficient. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to twenty respondents in Delta State Public library, Asaba.

Discussion of Results

Research Question One: How is the use of video conferencing platform enhancing story hour programme of Public Library in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean ratings of the use of video conferencing platform enhancing story hour programme of Public Library in South East Nigeria

S/N	Item Description In my library, gamification is used to:	X	SD	Remarks
1	produce visual progress bars to motivate children to complete modules during learning journey	3.44	.760	Agree
2	integrate games into story hour activities to make learning interesting	3.58	.632	Agree
3	produce game elements like points or rewards to make story hour sessions engaging	3.54	.572	Agree
4	produce storytelling games that increases children's participation in story hour	3.56	.570	Agree
5	train librarians to apply gamification techniques during learning	3.56	.548	Agree
6	integrate short, engaging games that reinforce learning concepts in a fun way	3.60	.518	Agree
7	add time limits to certain learning games to increase the challenging engagement in learning	3.51	.551	Agree

8	produce learning games that have trophies for completing tasks	3.53	.573	Agree
9	produce animations to introduce topics and spark discussions among children.	3.51	.528	Agree
10	produce animated transitions, effects, and characters throughout the learning platform to keep children engaged	3.53	.573	Agree
	Average	**3.54**	**.583**	**Agree**

Table 1 reveals the mean ratings of the use of video conferencing platform enhancing story hour programme of Public Library in South East Nigeria. The results show an overall mean score of 3.54 with a standard deviation of 0.583. This implies that the use of video conferencing platforms contributes significantly to improving story hour programmes in public libraries across South East Nigeria.

Research Question Two: How is the use of virtual reality storytelling enhancing story hour programme of Public Library in South East Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean ratings of the use of virtual reality storytelling enhancing story hour programme of Public Library in South East Nigeria

S/N	Item Description In my library, virtual reality is used to:	X	SD	Remarks
11	create immersive virtual classrooms where children can use stories to interact with instructors	3.46	.693	Agree
12	bring historical stories to life which allow children to have firsthand experience	3.51	.675	Agree
13	take children on virtual field trips to locations they may not be able to visit in person, such as distant countries or outer space	3.48	.636	Agree
14	give children firsthand experience to support the learning needs of children with disabilities	3.51	.551	Agree
15	produce a customized immersive learning environment	3.53	.551	Agree
16	create interactive assessments that test children's knowledge in a realistic setting	3.54	.526	Agree
17	create virtual environment that facilitates collaborative learning by allowing children to work together on projects	3.59	.520	Agree
18	incorporate game elements into virtual environment making learning more engaging for children	3.55	.549	Agree
19	produce virtual studios where children can create to display their artwork in a virtual space	3.53	.595	Agree
20	create virtual environments where children can practice language skills with native speakers.	3.59	.544	Agree
	Average	**3.53**	**.584**	**Agree**

Table 2 reveals the mean ratings of the use of virtual reality storytelling enhancing story hour programme of Public Library in South East Nigeria. The results indicate that the average mean score rating was 3.53 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.584. The findings indicated that the use of virtual reality storytelling

enhances story hour programme of Public Library in South East Nigeria.

Discussion of Results

From the analysis, it revealed that the use of video conferencing platforms contributes significantly to improving story hour programmes in public libraries across South East Nigeria. Video conferencing allows librarians to engage children virtually, breaking geographical barriers and reaching wider audiences. Furthermore, the results revealed that the use of virtual reality storytelling enhances story hour programme of public Library in South East Nigeria. By placing children "inside" the story, VR stimulates imagination, emotional engagement and deeper comprehension of narratives.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussions of results, the study concluded that integrating diverse technological tools such as video conferencing, virtual reality storytelling, significantly enhances story hour programmes in public libraries across South East Nigeria.

Implications of the findings

The findings have broad implications for library services, literacy development and education in Nigeria. Digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams have expanded the scope of library services beyond physical spaces. Virtual Reality provides immersive, interactive environments that transform passive listening into experiential learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Libraries should formally integrate digital platforms into their service frameworks to ensure consistent and sustainable access to virtual programmes, workshops, and consultations.
2. Institutions should adopt Virtual Reality (VR) as a pedagogical tool within library and classroom settings to foster experiential learning.

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