Students' Perception of the Prescribed African Prose Literature Texts in Public Secondary Schools in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated students' perception of the two prescribed African prose literature texts, So the Path Does Not Die by Pede Hollist and Redemption Road by Elma Shaw in public secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government Area, Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted. The participants were 500 SSII students from 10 randomly selected public senior secondary schools. The instruments used was Students' Perception of the Prescribed African Prose Literature Texts Questionnaire (r=0.77). Findings showed that students perceived the themes of the prescribed texts as relevant, meaningful, and applicable to their understanding of social realities, recording a weighted mean score of 3.39 against a criterion mean of 2.50. Respondents also held a positive opinion of the overall quality of the texts, with a weighted mean score of 3.26. In terms of cultural representation, a weighted mean score of 3.25 indicated that respondents agreed the texts reflected important aspects of African cultural identity and heritage. Similarly, a weighted mean score of 3.16 showed that respondents generally perceived the texts as relevant and applicable to their personal experiences and contemporary social realities. The study concluded that students generally held a positive perception of the prescribed African prose literature texts across the four dimensions examined. It is recommended that teachers adopt learner-centred and interactive teaching strategies, relate literature lessons to students' lived experiences, emphasise the cultural value of African prose texts, ensure the availability of prescribed texts in schools, and participate in regular workshops and professional development programmes to enhance the effective teaching and learning of Literature in English.

Keywords: Perception, African prose literature, Prescribed texts, *So the Path Does Not Die*

Introduction

Literature is a core subject in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, formally taught as Literature in English. Literature in English, as an academic discipline, seeks to expose students to imaginative works written in English with the aim of developing linguistic competence, critical thinking, moral reasoning, aesthetic appreciation and cultural consciousness. *Redemption Road* The subject is embedded in the national curriculum and examined by external bodies such as WAEC and NECO making it an essential component of secondary school education in Nigeria. Through the study of literature, students are expected to not only succeed in examinations but also develop lifelong reading habits and a greater awareness of human experiences. Literature has a lot of values for society. It entertains people by providing them with interesting stories, poems and plays to enjoy. Literature also teaches us about life, culture, history and human behaviour. It has moral lessons of honesty, kindness and courage. It also develops imagination and creativity in readers, improves language and communication skills, and creates awareness about social issues in society. Through literature, writers are also able to express their feelings, thoughts, and experiences.

Literature in English is organised around three major genres: prose, drama, and poetry (Ezeokoli and Igubor, 2014). Prose is a major literary genre that presents ideas, events, and human experiences in a continuous and natural flow of language. It includes forms such as novels, novellas, and short stories, and it is written in ordinary grammatical structures without the patterned rhythm found in poetry. Prose allows writers to develop characters, settings, and plots in detail, making it suitable for exploring social issues, cultural values, and moral lessons in a realistic manner (Ezeokoli and Igubor, 2014). This study has given special emphasis to prescribed Prose literature because it plays a significant role in the curriculum of Literature in English. African prose works are mainly recommended because they provide detailed narratives in which social realities, historical experiences, moral values and practices of African cultures are explored. (Essuman 2021). By engaging with characters and plots, students can learn about human behavior, social issues and a moral lesson in a tangible way (Essuman, 2021). In addition, the use of prose texts also fosters extensive reading among the secondary school students which is crucial for their comprehension skills and interpretative ability (Ezeokoli and Igubor, 2016).

The importance of prose literature in enhancing students' vocabulary and language proficiency has been well recognized (Nnamdi Eruchalu, 2021). The interaction with the prose texts exposes students to a range of sentence structures, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and figurative language which collectively impact positively on their reading, writing and speaking skills (Fakeye and Adebile, 2014). Further to this, prose literature also creates useful contexts in which language is used, which further enhances the effective learning of the English language in the school curriculum.

The prose texts are divided into two categories: African and non African texts (So the Path Does Not Die by Pede Hollist and Redemption Road by Elma Shaw) and non African (To Kill a Mocking Bird by Harper Lee and Path of Lucas: The Journey He Endured by Susanne Bellefeuille). Prose literature is also an important instrument in the preservation and transmission of culture in Africa. Indigenous traditions, belief systems, customs and social values are found in many of the prescribed African novels (Megbowon and Uwah, 2020). These texts provide students with an understanding of African life, cultural differences and history, thereby promoting a sense of identity and appreciation of the culture. In this respect, the prose literature can become a vehicle for the cultural education or continuity in a rapidly globalizing world (Simel, 2024).

The prescribed African prose texts are officially stated in the Literature in English syllabus for each academic session. However, several factors have been identified as reasons why students often fail to read these texts. These include lack of personal possession of the prescribed novels, negative perceptions of the texts as lengthy or uninteresting, linguistic difficulty, ineffective teaching methods, poor reading culture, overcrowded classrooms, and examination oriented teaching that discourages independent reading (Ezeokoli and Igubor, 2014). Consequently, students' perceptions of the prescribed prose texts play a significant role in determining their level of engagement and achievement in Literature in English (Simel, 2024).

An important dimension that influences student attitudes to and reading of African prose literature is cultural factors. Although the choice of the prescribed African texts is made so as to make the texts representative of the African cultural contexts and experiences, the fact remains that the Nigerian cultures are so diverse that different student groups will be impacted by the same texts differently because of their ethnic backgrounds, their regionality, religious affiliations, their cultural practices, and their knowledge of the culture. Nigeria is a country that consists of more than 250 ethnic groups with different languages, cultural background, history, and perception of the world.

Students' perception of prescribed African prose texts is also influenced by their reading habits, English language proficiency, availability of prescribed texts, and the instructional practices adopted by teachers. Ajagbe (2023) found that these factors significantly determine students' learning outcomes in prose Literature in English among public secondary school students in Ibadan. The degree to which students perceive African prose texts to be culturally relevant to themselves versus culturally distant or alien to them in turn affects their interaction with and enjoyment of the literature (Dahiru, 2020).

A further type of issues that influence the quality of literature education and experience of students is curriculum-related factors. Although the Literature in English curriculum is thorough in its formulation of the goals and skills to be acquired, it faces challenges of implementation that influence the experience of learning literature among students (Ajagbe, 2023). These issues are a lack of instructional time on literature due to conflicting course requirements and the amount of content required to be taught in three literature genres (prose, drama, and poetry) (Dahiru, 2020); possible discrepancies between curriculum outcomes regarding student competencies and the level of their preparation; disconnections between the declared curriculum outcomes of critical analysis and creative response and the practices of examination that may encourage memorisation of the material; and, in some cases, the lack of fit between the set curriculum requirements and the interests, experiences, and cultural background of modern students.

In the Nigerian educational setting, several aspects of the literature education have been studied in depth; however, there are still significant gaps in the literature concerning the personal attitude of the students toward the prescribed texts on African prose. The literature has already discussed such issues as teaching strategies in literature classes (Ezeokoli and Igubor, 2014), the issues that literature teachers encounter (Ugwu, 2022), trends of text ownership (Ezeokoli and Igubor, 2014), and the issues that affect the learning and teaching of literature (Dahiru, 2020). Nevertheless, relatively little systematic empirical research has particularly and in some detail addressed the subjective perceptions of students studying the African prose texts they read. This lack of knowledge is a setback to curriculum developers, text selectors, educators, and policymakers, who, in turn, do not have a sufficient idea of student attitudes, which might be used to make the process of text selection, pedagogical strategies, and support mechanisms more effective and efficient to improve the quality and efficiency of literature education.

This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a systematic investigation of the perceptions of prescribed African prose literature texts among students, identifying certain features of texts that prompt positive or negative reactions, and determining the impact of different variables such as

teaching strategies, possession of texts, language proficiency, and student traits on student perceptions. Through the student voices and experiences, the research is expected to produce knowledge that can transform the experience of literature education to be more appealing, relevant, and effective among the various student population that the research is meant to serve.

Statement of the Problem

Prose literature forms a core component of Literature-in-English and is systematically taught in Nigerian secondary schools to improve students' language proficiency, enhance vocabulary development, promoting cultural awareness, and fostering critical and imaginative thinking. Through African prose texts, students are expected to understand their cultural heritage, relate literary experiences to real-life situations, and develop positive reading habits that support academic success. In spite of the relevance of African prose literature in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum and the significant amount of time that is given to teaching students, the prose texts that are prescribed in the curriculum, there still exist lingering questions as to how students read and interact with these literary texts. The underlying issue that the proposed study will solve is the lack of empirical knowledge on how students in secondary school in the Ibadan North East Local Government Area view African prose literature texts that are prescribed and what influences such views. This study therefore, explored the perceptions of students in a systematic way in order to produce evidence that will be used to facilitate educational changes, which will not only benefit students but also the wider goals of literature education in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the students on the prescribed African prose literature texts in the public secondary schools which are located in the Ibadan North East Local Government Area, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to investigate the perception of the student about the prescribed prose African text literature in terms of the theme of the text, the general quality of the text, cultural representation and relevance to student lives.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study: What the perception of the student about the prescribed prose African text literature in terms of:
1. the theme of the text
2. the general quality of the text
3. Cultural representation
4. relevance to student lives

Scope of the Study

The study covered SS2 students offering literature in English as a subject in public secondary schools in Ibadan North East local government, the study will focus on students' perception of the prescribed African prose literature texts used in the Literature in English curriculum. It investigated the perceptions of the students on the prescribed African prose literature texts in the public secondary schools

Significance of the Study

The research is quite significant to various groups of stakeholders. The study will find out the general perception of the students about the prescribed text, the waec stalk holders should know student perception about the text that was recommended either it's positive or negative, if it's positive, they will be at ease and if it's negative, they will prescribe another text. Another one is to know the students' general feelings about the themes of the prescribed text, to know if the themes is relevant to their background and culture. The finding of the study will provide information on the quality of the prescribed text.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design.. A multi stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the respondents. The respondents were 500 SS2 students randomly selected from 10 secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area (50 per school). The instrument used for data collection in this study was Students' Perception of Prescribed African Prose Literature Questionnaire (r=0.77). The 500 copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher. A letter of introduction was obtained from the Head of the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education which was presented to the principals of the selected schools to seek their permission and cooperation. The researcher visited each of the selected schools and distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. The respondents completed the questionnaires, and they were collected immediately after completion. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, namely frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation .

Results

Research question one: What are the perceptions of the student about the prescribed African prose text literature in terms of theme of the text?

Table 4.1.2 Perception of the students about the prescribed African prose texts literature in terms of the theme of the texts

s/n	Theme of the text	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1	The central themes address real challenges like poverty and resilience in African communities	7 1.4%	13 2.6%	195 39.0%	285 57.0%	3.52	0.62
2	Moral lessons from the themes promote positive values	1 0.2%	17 3.4%	299 59.8%	183 36.6%	3.33	0.55
3	Themes of conflict and change mirror historical events in Nigeria's past	2 0.4%	37 7.4%	224 44.8%	237 47.4%	3.39	0.64
4	The text's themes encourage critical thinking about social justice	6 1.2%	58 11.6%	202 40.4%	234 46.8%	3.33	0.72
5	Universal themes (e.g., love, betrayal) make the story timeless and relatable	5 1.0%	40 8.0%	212 42.4%	243 48.6%	3.39	0.68
Weighted Mean =3.39; Criterion mean= 2.50							

Table 1 showed the students' perceptions of the prescribed African prose text literature in terms of its thematic content. The study revealed a positive perception of the themes portrayed in the text, as indicated by the weighted mean of 3.39. This revealed that students generally agreed that the themes embedded in the prescribed prose text are relevant, meaningful, and beneficial to their understanding of societal issues. The highest rated item was that the central themes address real challenges such as poverty and resilience in African communities (Mean=3.52), indicating that students strongly recognised the text's reflection of contemporary African realities. Similarly, students agreed that themes of conflict and change mirror historical events in Nigeria's past (Mean=3.39) and that universal themes such as love and betrayal make the story timeless and relatable (Mean=3.39). Furthermore, respondents acknowledged that moral lessons derived from the themes promote positive values (Mean=3.33) and that the text encourages critical thinking about issues of social justice (Mean=3.33). With the weighted mean of 3.39 against the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that students had a good perception of the themes of the prescribed prose texts.

Research question two: What are the perceptions of the student about the prescribed African prose text literature in terms of the general quality of the texts?

Table 2: Perception of the students about the prescribed African prose texts literature in terms of the general quality of the texts

s/n	General quality of the text	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1	The prescribed texts are of high literary quality.	7 1.4%	50 10.0%	234 46.8%	209 41.8%	3.29	0.70
2	The text are engaging and well written	6 1.2%	52 10.4%	245 49.0%	197 39.4%	3.27	0.69
3	The texts Encourage critical thinking	9 1.8%	66 13.2%	206 41.2%	219 43.8%	3.27	0.76
4	The language use in the texts is appropriate for students	50 10.0%	75 15.0%	211 42.2%	164 32.8%	2.98	0.94
5	The plot is well organized	15 3.0%	31 6.2%	142 28.4%	312 62.4%	3.50	0.75
Weighted Mean =3.26; Criterion mean= 2.50							

Table 2 presented the students' perceptions of the prescribed African prose literature texts in terms of the general quality of the texts. The findings revealed that students generally perceived the prescribed African prose texts as being of high quality, with a weighted mean of 3.26, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicated that the respondents had a positive opinion of the overall quality of the prescribed African prose texts used in public secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government Area. The findings further revealed that the highest rated item was "The plot is well

organized" with a mean score of 3.50. This suggested that students appreciated the logical arrangement of events in the texts and found the stories easy to follow. A well organized plot helps readers understand the sequence of events and maintain interest throughout the story.

Students also agreed that the prescribed texts are of high literary quality with a mean score of 3.29. This implied that they considered the texts to possess good literary features such as meaningful themes, effective characterization, and interesting storylines. The respondents therefore regarded the prescribed texts as valuable literary works. Similarly, the respondents agreed that the texts are engaging and well written (Mean = 3.27). This indicated that the language, style, and presentation of the stories were attractive to the students and encouraged them to read with interest. An engaging text motivates learners to participate actively in literature lessons and improves their appreciation of literary works. The findings also showed that the respondents agreed that the texts encourage critical thinking (Mean = 3.27). This suggested that the prescribed African prose texts expose students to important social, moral, and cultural issues, thereby helping them to analyse situations, make informed judgments, and develop problem solving skills.

Although the language used in the texts is appropriate for students recorded the lowest mean score (2.98), it is still above the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that students generally found the language understandable and suitable for their level of education, although some may have experienced minor difficulties with unfamiliar vocabulary or expressions.

With the weighted mean of 3.26 against the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that students had a good perception of the prescribed prose texts in terms of general quality.

Research question three: What are the perceptions of the student about the prescribed African prose text literature in terms of cultural representation?

Table 3: Perception of the students about the prescribed African prose texts li terature in terms of cultural representation

s/n	Cultural representation	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
: 1	Festivals and traditions depicted authentically represent African culture	11 2.2%	37 7.4%	289 57.8%	163 32.6%	3.21	0.67
2	The text highlights both strengths and flaws in African cultural practices	7 1.4%	37 7.4%	256 51.2%	200 40.0%	3.30	0.66
3	Colonial influences on culture are shown fairly	10 2.0%	50 10.0%	242 48.4%	198 39.6%	3.26	0.72
4	Local beliefs and superstitions add depth to cultural portrayal	12 2.4%	44 8.8%	216 43.2%	228 45.6%	3.32	0.73
5	The story avoids Western biases in representing African identity	20 4.0%	60 12.0%	232 46.4%	188 37.6%	3.18	0.79
Weighted Mean =3.25; Criterion mean= 2.50							

Table 3 showed students' perceptions of the prescribed African prose text literature in terms of cultural representation. The study revealed that students generally perceived the text as providing a positive and authentic portrayal of African culture, as evidenced by the weighted mean of 3.25. This revealed that the respondents agreed that the text effectively reflects important aspects of African cultural identity and heritage. Among the items, local beliefs and superstitions add depth to cultural portrayal recorded the highest mean score (Mean=3.32), indicating that students appreciated the role of indigenous beliefs in enriching the cultural context of the narrative. This was closely followed by the perception that the highlights both the strengths and flaws of African cultural practices (Mean=3.30), indicating that students viewed the text as presenting a balanced depiction of African culture rather than an idealised one. Respondents also agreed that colonial influences on culture are shown fairly (Mean=3.26) and that festivals and traditions depicted in the text authentically represent African culture (Mean=3.21), reflecting recognition of the text's cultural relevance and historical consciousness. Hence, students perceived the prescribed African prose text as a valuable medium for preserving, portraying, and promoting African cultural values, traditions, beliefs, and historical experiences while encouraging a nuanced understanding of African

identity and cultural transformation.

With the weighted mean of 3.25 against the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that that students had a good perception of the prescribed prose texts in terms of cultural representation.

Research question four: What are the perceptions of the student about the prescribed African prose text literature in terms of relevance to students' lives?

Table 4: Perception of the students about the prescribed African prose texts literature in terms of relevance to student's lives

s/n	Relevance to students' lives	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1	Story events resemble family or peer conflicts I have seen or experienced	11 2.2%	59 11.8%	239 47.8%	191 38.2%	3.22	0.74
2	Themes help me navigate academic pressures and future goals	12 2.4%	61 12.2%	220 44.0%	207 41.4%	3.24	0.76
3	The text's lesson applies to current issues like corruption or migration	9 1.8%	75 15.0%	214 42.8%	202 40.4%	3.22	0.76
4	Characters' experiences motivate better behaviour in school and home	28 5.6%	78 15.6%	211 42.2%	183 36.6%	3.10	0.86
5	It bridges school learning with real life community values	57 11.4%	72 14.4%	181 36.2%	190 38.0%	3.01	0.99
Weighted Mean =3.16; Criterion mean= 2.50							

Table 4 showed students' perceptions of the prescribed African prose text literature in terms of its relevance to their lives. The study revealed that students generally perceived the prescribed text as relevant and applicable to their personal experiences and contemporary social realities, as reflected by the weighted mean of 3.16. This revealed that the respondents believed the lessons, themes, and experiences portrayed in the text have practical significance in their everyday lives. Among the items, the themes help me navigate academic pressures and future goals recorded the highest mean score (Mean=3.24), indicating that students viewed the text as a useful guide for personal development and decision making. This was closely followed by the perception that story events resemble family or peer conflicts they have seen or experienced (Mean=3.22) and that the text's lesson apply to contemporary issues such as corruption and migration (Mean=3.22), indicating that students found the narrative relatable and relevant to current societal challenges. Respondents also agreed that characters' experiences motivate better behaviour at school and at home (Mean=3.10), highlighting the educational and moral value of the text. Although bridging school learning with real life community values recorded the lowest mean score (Mean=3.01).

Hence, students perceived the prescribed African prose text as meaningful and relevant to their lives, helping them understand real world issues, develop positive values, manage personal and academic challenges, and connect classroom learning with experiences within their families and communities. With the weighted mean of 3.16 against the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that that students had a good perception of the prescribed prose texts in terms of relevance to their lives.

Discussion of Findings

Student's Perception of the Prescribed African Prose Texts in Terms of the Themes of the Texts

The results of this study indicated that the themes covered in the prescribed African prose text were favourably received by the students. There was a strong consensus that the text covered modern-day issues in Africa, including poverty and resilience, reinforced positive values, represented African history, and spurred critical thinking on social justice, and featured universal themes that were still applicable across generations. The results of these findings showed that students did not only value the study of African prose literature as a course requirement but also as a tool to understand social problems and moral growth. This finding corroborates that of ? latunji and Adebayo (2022) that African prose texts in Nigerian secondary schools give learners the opportunities to reflect on social realities and gain cultural experiences, both of which encourage value formation. In their study, they determined that the themes of the literary text

were more relevant when they were based on similar social experiences and issues in society as they experienced and encountered. Likewise, the present study revealed that the students strongly identified with themes which were linked to poverty, resilience, conflict, social justice since they relate to their lived realities. The result also corroborates the findings of Eze and Nwosu (2021) who noted that African Literature is an effective pedagogy for introducing secondary school students to the promotion of moral education. Literary themes can also be used to pass on values such as honesty, perseverance, empathy, and responsibility, according to the authors. This was in line with the current study's result that students considered moral lessons taught by the text to be important factors in positive value orientation. Moreover, this study supports the result of Adeyemi and Olaleye (2023) that the modern African prose literature contributed to the students' knowledge about the historical events and changes in the societies in Africa. Their study showed that students who are exposed to texts that represent conflict, colonialism and change in society, acquire a greater understanding of history and citizenship. The current finding also indicated that themes of conflict and change were among the students' perceptions of Nigeria's history.

Student's Perception of the Prescribed African Prose Texts in Terms of General Quality of the Texts.

This study showed that there was an affirmative attitude of students to the prescribed texts of the African prose literature generally. The results indicated that the students perceived the recommended books as effective learning materials which could contribute to the development of literary appreciation and intellectual development of students. This study's findings corroborate those of Achebe (1975) who argued that African literature must educate, entertain and reflect what may be understood and appreciated by the reader. The results also corroborate with Emenyonu (2004) who claimed that African prose literature has a significant role in the development of the learners' critical thinking, moral and understanding of their society through meaningful literature experience. In addition, the results corroborated the arguments of Ogunba (1978) that there are some characteristics of literature that should interest students and enhance their appreciation of texts: the plot should be engaging, the language should be suitable, and the theme should be relevant. Likewise, Abiola Irele (2001) found that African literary works afforded students opportunities to grasp their cultural heritage, enhance their language competence and intellectual capacities. This assisted the respondents' favourable attitude towards the prescribed African prose texts. The results in general showed that the prescribed African prose literature texts were viewed by the students as good, well written, intellectually challenging and suitable for secondary school students. Such positive perceptions will likely engender the interest of students in literature and enhance their appreciation of African prose reading texts..

Students' Perceptions of the African Prose Texts in Terms of Cultural Representation

The results of this study showed that students had positive perceptions of the prescribed African prose text with regard to cultural representation. Students especially enjoyed the local beliefs and superstitions, the balanced presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of African practices, colonial impact on the culture and the festivals and traditions. The findings showed that learners perceived text based material as a good medium to maintain and pass on the cultural values, traditions and experiences of Africa.

This is in line with the study of Adeyinka and Olatunbosun (2022) which revealed that African prose literature contributed significantly to the process of cultural awareness and identity development among secondary school students. Their research showed that pupils who had been exposed to culturally stimulating literary texts had a deeper understanding of African traditions, customs and values. This corroborated the current findings that festivals, traditions and indigenous practices that students encountered in the text were seen as true to African culture. Further, the finding was in line with the assertion of Yusuf and Aremu (2023) that representation of Africa and Africans' cultures in school curricula, which emphasized African-centred narratives, reduced western-centred representation of Africa and increased cultural pride on the students. The students showed a lower mean score in relation to the avoidance of Western biases but the item received positive responses, suggesting that students were generally positive about the text being an African identity from an African perspective.

Student's Perceptions of the Prescribed African Prose Texts in Terms of Relevance to Their Lives

The results of this study showed that pupils found the prescribed text of African prose relevant to their lives and the social realities of their times. Students especially highlighted that themes assisted them with their studies' difficulties and future goals, that the story events are similar to family and peer

conflicts they have faced, and that the lessons taken from the story were relevant in their own society in relation to corruption and migration. The findings indicated that the learners' perception of African prose literature was not only as a subject of study but also as a source of understanding and responding to real life challenges. This finding corresponds with Akinyemi and Adegbite (2022) who noted that students' preference for literary texts was higher when they could make connections with the event, character, and theme of the texts with what they experience. In their research, they found that students perceived literature as having significance when it portrayed issues they faced in their families, schools, and communities. Likewise, the current research showed students had a strong identification with story items similar to family and peer conflicts where the prescribed text was relevant to their real life, as did the identification of items with greater relevance. Moreover, the discovery supported the findings of Oladipo and Ogunleye (2023) that the modern prose literature in Africa frequently dealt with topical concerns of the society like corruption, migration, unemployment, inequality and leadership, among others. They found that students who interacted with these texts had improved social awareness and an understanding of national and international issues. This was in line with the current study which resulted in the respondents' perception that the lessons gained from the text were relevant to the current problems facing society. Furthermore, the finding was consistent with that of Yusuf and Adebayo (2023) who noted that literature plays a key role in value education since it offers a linkage that formal education will not do, with community norms and social expectations. Respondents gave the lowest mean score for the bridging school learning with community values item, but the positive rating means that students are aware of the fact that literature is a connection between learning at school and the reality of life in society..

Conclusion

The study concluded that students in public secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government generally had a positive perception of prescribed African prose literature texts. Students showed the strongest appreciation for the thematic content, particularly in relation to social realities, moral lessons, and universal human experiences. They also see African prose texts as culturally representative, that is, they believe that they represent the African traditions, values and identity fairly well. A high perception of the relevance of the texts to students' experiences is there, however, with less strength between literature and lived experiences.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study to improve students' perception of prescribed African prose literature in public secondary schools of Ibadan North East local government of Oyo State of Nigeria:

1. The teachers should be more student-centred and interactive in their teaching by using group discussion, dramatization and debate to improve students' interaction with African prose.
2. Literature lessons should be related to students' life experiences to increase the relevance of literature and make it meaningful and relatable.
3. African prose literature should be given more cultural dimension in school and by teachers to make the students appreciate the African identity and heritage.
4. Prescribed texts of African prose should be made available and the government and education stakeholders should ensure that all pupils can access the original texts as opposed to relying on a summary or notes.
5. Teachers should undergo regular training in workshops and seminars on the new methods of instruction for effective teaching of literature.

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