

# **SOCIAL STATUS AS A FACTOR FOR THE READERSHIP OF YORUBA NEWSPAPERS IN NIGERIA**

ABIODUN SALAWU

*University of Lagos, Nigeria*

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the relevance or otherwise of the demographic variables of educational level, income level and age to the readership of mother-tongue newspapers, with a particular reference to Yoruba newspapers in Nigeria.

A survey research method was adopted for the study. The study population was made up of civil servants in the Oyo State Government Secretariat, Ibadan, Nigeria. From this population a sample of 450 respondents was taken. The sampling procedure adopted was the systematic sampling. The instrument for the Survey Research was a self-administered questionnaire.

This study established that Social Status is a factor in the readership of Yoruba Newspapers. The specific findings include.

- (i) The higher the age, the more the respondents were likely to be aware of Yoruba newspapers.
- (ii) The higher the level of education, the lower the readership of newspapers.
- (iii) The higher the level of education, the less regular the readership of Yoruba newspapers.

*Keywords: social status, readership, Yoruba newspapers*

## **INTRODUCTION**

There exist different social categories in every society. The social categories are based on age, sex, educational and economic status. A social category is characterized by certain interests and a particular world-view. In other words, the variables of age, sex, education and economic status are very fundamental to the interests and world-view of any individual.

Interests and world-view incorporate taste and attitude. Invariably, one's age, sex, educational and economic status would go a long way to determine one's taste or preference and attitude towards issues, ideas and objects. As in the case of other products, media products are selectively patronized and attended to based on the 'make-ups' of each individual. For this reason, certain media are linked to certain groups of individuals. Wright (1986: 13) notes that the audiences for specific mass media seem to differ more significantly in their social characteristics than in any recognizable personal traits. He further notes that *combinations* (emphasis supplied) of social statuses (status sets) and

interpersonal surroundings can be related to different patterns of communication behaviour.

There have been several studies made of the patterns of audience behaviour vis-à-vis the mass media (Wright 1975: 370–413). These studies are, however, limited to the audiences of specific mass media like radio, television, newspapers and magazines and audiences for their specific contents such as science news and information. None of the studies has actually looked at the mass media in terms of language use and patterns of audiences that attend to specific media with specific language use. This, therefore, forms the focus of this paper, that is, to examine the relevance or otherwise of the demographic variables of educational level, income level and age to the readership of mother-tongue newspapers, with a particular reference to Yoruba newspapers in Nigeria.

## 1. SOCIAL STATUS AND LITERACY IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Literacy in indigenous languages has suffered considerable neglect in Nigeria (Udosen 2002; Awoniyi 1995). A major reason for this is the attitude of the urban educated elite (Udosen 2002: 288; Ogenyi 2002: 138). These scholars lament how the Nigerian elites take delight in having their children taught exclusively in English at the expense of their indigenous language. Ogenyi (2002: 138), for instance, writes:

The true position and what is *being practised* (emphasis supplied) is that pre-primary education is provided exclusively through the medium of English by private education entrepreneurs. Most parents who send their children to such schools are not interested in their learning a Nigerian language; rather they wish their children to be educated in English which they consider more prestigious and useful.

The rural (African) dwellers and the urban poor, however, still have a lot of appreciation and regard for their native languages: Ngugi (1993) writes:

What prevented our languages from being completely swallowed up by English and other oppressor languages was that the rural and urban masses, who had refused to surrender completely in the political and economic spheres, also continued to breathe life into our languages and thus helped to keep alive the histories and cultures they carried. The masses of Africa would often derive the strength needed in their economic and political struggles from those very languages. Thus, the people of the Third World had refused to surrender their souls to English, French, or Portuguese.

The attitude of the African urban educated elites to their native languages has its roots in the colonial history of the peoples of the continent. The Europeans colonized the minds of the Africans, relegating African languages and cultures

to the background while exalting their own languages. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, a foremost African writer of Kenyan origin, narrates his experience:

English became more than a language: it was the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference. Thus, one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes, the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford (Ngugi 1986: 11).

As a result of this kind of experience, Africans have been made to be ashamed of things native to them. The same Ngugi, in an interview published in *African Theater Review* (Eyoh 1986: 112), laments this situation:

Whereas you see today people identify themselves with that which is removed from themselves. That which is near them, they don't want to identify with.

Esen (1982), writing about literacy in the Ibibio language, makes a more worrisome comment:

Western education seems to have acted together to uproot the newer generation of Ibibio from the linguistic soil of their fathers and foisted a bastard language on them. Thus, education has helped to kill the Ibibio language through disuse (quoted in Udosen 2002: 287).

## 2. THE STUDY

A survey research method was adopted for this study. The method was used to measure respondents' knowledge of and attitudes to Yoruba newspapers. It was also used to investigate the social and behavioural characteristics of the sample.

The study population was made up of civil servants in the Oyo State Government Secretariat, Ibadan. This population was chosen because it provides a representative picture of the literate population with different levels of education. It was assumed that the population would represent the reading population.

From the population of civil servants in the Secretariat, a sample of 450 respondents across the nine ministries in the secretariat was taken. The sampling procedure adopted for the study was systematic sampling. The instrument for the Survey Research was a self-administered questionnaire. In accordance with the spirit of the study, the questionnaire was constructed in Yoruba. The people in the sample were Yoruba. A return rate of 360 of the 450 copies of the questionnaire distributed was achieved. The return rate was 80%.

*Social Status as a Factor for the Readership of Yoruba Newspapers*

We start by analyzing the demographic and socio-economic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Age.

Age Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
No response	4	1.1	1.1
11–15	4	1.1	2.2
16–25	45	12.5	14.7
26–35	95	26.4	41.1
36–45	127	35.3	76.4
46 and above	85	23.6	100.0
TOTAL	360	100.0	

The Table shows that a majority of the respondents are between the age range of thirty-six (36) to forty-five (45), while the age-group with the smallest number of respondents is 11–15 years. This is understandable in the sense that this is a minor age group and we are dealing with workers, the preponderance of whom would be far above the age.

Table 2. Sex.

Respondent's sex categories	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
No response	6	1.1	1.7
Male	183	50.8	52.5
Female	171	47.5	100.0
TOTAL	360	100.0	

As shown in Table 2, 183 (or 50.8%) of the respondents are male, while 171 (or 47.5%) are female.

Table 3. Education.

	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
No Response	15	4.2	4.2
Primary School	63	17.5	21.7
WASC/Tech. Coll	158	43.8	65.5
OND/NCE	50	13.9	79.4
HND, 1 <sup>ST</sup> DEGREE & Above	74	20.6	100.0
TOTAL	360	100.0	

Table 3 shows that the highest educational attainment of most of the respondents is the West African School Certificate and the Technical College Certificate.

One hundred and fifty-eight (43.8%) of the respondents belong to this category. The group with the smallest number of respondents is OND/NCE (50 or 13.9%), while 15 (or 4.2%) of the respondents gave no response.

**Table 4.** Income (Salary Grade Level).

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum Percent</b>
No response	23	6.4	6.4
01–03	62	17.2	23.6
04–06	117	32.5	56.1
07–09	99	27.5	83.6
10 and above	59	16.4	100.0
TOTAL	360	100.0	

A majority of the respondents, precisely 117 (or 32.5%) of them, belong to Salary Grade Level 04–06. This corresponds with the results shown in Table 4, where a majority of the respondents belong to the WASC/Technical College group. Evidently, most of the people with these levels of education would belong to the Salary Grade Level 04–06. The Salary Grade Level group with the smallest number of respondents is 10 and above, 59 (or 16.4%).

From this point we start by analyzing the respondents’ variables highlighted above with the readership of Yoruba newspapers. Initially, we consider the respondents’ frequency of speaking the Yoruba language.

The study indicates that 305 (or 84.6%) of the respondents speak Yoruba at all times. Of this figure, 159 or 44.2% are in the *very often* category.

With a significance level of .05, an examination of the association between respondents’ age and the frequency of their speaking the Yoruba language reveals that there is no statistically significant relationship. This means that age has nothing to do with the frequency of speaking the Yoruba language.

It is also observed that 305 (or 84.8%) of the total number of respondents speak Yoruba at all times. Of this figure, 159 (or 44.2%) are in the ‘very often’ category, while 146 (or 40.6%) are in the ‘often’ category.

This shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between respondents’ level of education and the frequency of their speaking the Yoruba language. Among the respondents in the Primary School Category, 60 of the 63 respondents speak Yoruba regularly (very often and often). One and twenty-nine out of 158 in the WASC/Technical College category speak it regularly, and 39 out of 50 in the OND/NCE category do likewise. Sixty-eight out of the 74 respondents in the HND/1<sup>st</sup> degree and above category speak the language at all times.

The study again reveals that 227 (or 76.9%) of the respondents have a high degree of ability (‘very well’ and ‘well’) to read Yoruba.

It is also shown that there is no statistically significant relationship between age and the degree of ability to read Yoruba. This is in line with the earlier

*Social Status as a Factor for the Readership of Yoruba Newspapers*

analysis, which also does not depict any statistically significant relation between age and frequency in speaking Yoruba.

As similarly noted, the study, equally, reveals that two hundred and seventy-seven (227) (or 76.9%) of the respondents have a high ability (very well and well) to read Yoruba. The Table also indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between respondents' level of education and their ability to read Yoruba.

Concerning the respondents' frequency of reading materials published in Yoruba, a majority, 184 (or 51.1%) of the respondents, does not frequently read such materials. One hundred and fifty nine (159) (or 41.2%) indicate reading such materials frequently (very often and often), while there were 17 (or 4.7) no responses.

It was also necessary to see whether such a factor as education determines the rate of reading materials published in Yoruba. The study further indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between education and the frequency of reading materials that are published in Yoruba, with the significance put at .0039. The higher the level of education, the less frequent the reading of materials published in Yoruba.

Next, the data were examined to discover whether or not respondents prefer reading materials published in English to those published in Yoruba.

A greater number of respondents (144 or 40.0) say they prefer reading materials published in English to those published in Yoruba. One hundred and thirty-nine or 38.6% are indifferent, which means they would not mind reading in either of the languages, while 64 (17.8%) say "No".

We also believed it would be necessary to find out whether education could be a factor in the response to this question.

The study shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables of education and a preference for materials published in English over those published in Yoruba.

Next, we moved to find out whether or not the respondents are aware of Yoruba newspapers.

**Table 5.** Respondents' Awareness of Yoruba Newspapers.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum Percent</b>
No Response	26	7.2	7.2
YES	265	73.6	80.8
NO	35	9.7	90.6
CANNOT SAY	34	9.4	100.0
TOTAL	360	100.0	

Table 5 reveals that a great majority of the respondents (73.6%) are aware of Yoruba newspapers. Only 35 (or 9.7%) of the respondents say they do not know

of any at all, while 34 (or 9.4%) cannot simply say whether they know of any Yoruba newspaper or not.

However, do variables such as age and education determine respondents' response? The following Tables will reveal that.

**Table 6.** Cross-Tabulation of Respondents' Age with Awareness of Yoruba Newspapers.

AGE CATEGORIES		YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	ROW TOTAL
	0	1	2	3	
0	.3	3 .8			4 1.1
1 11–15		3 .8	1 3		4 1.1
2 16–25	6 .3	26 4.7	3 5.0	10 2.5	45 12.5
3 26–35	2 .6	70 19.4	11 3.1	12 3.3	95 26.4
4 36–45	11 1.9	95 13.1	11 17.5	10 2.8	127 35.3
5 46 +	6 1.7	68 18.9	9 2.5	2 .6	85 23.6
COLUMN	26	265	35	34	360
TOTAL	7.2	73.6	9.7	9.4	100.0
$X^2 = 26.95$ d.f = 15                      Significance = .0291					

Table 6 shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between age and awareness of Yoruba newspapers. Seventy-five percent of respondents in the 11–15 age group say “Yes”, 57.8% in the 16–25 age group, 74.8% in the 36–45 age group and 80% in the 46 years and above age group. The higher the age, the more likely the respondents were to be aware of Yoruba newspapers.

*Social Status as a Factor for the Readership of Yoruba Newspapers*

**Table 7.** Cross-Tabulation Of Education With Awareness Of Yoruba Newspapers.

		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>CANNOT SAY</b>	<b>ROW TOTAL</b>
	0	1	2	3	
0	2 .6	10 2.8	1 .3	2 .6	15 4.2
1 PRY SCH	12 3.3	41 11.4	7 1.9	3 .8	63 17.5
2 WASC, TECH SCH	8 2.2	127 35.3	13 3.6	10 2.8	158 43.9
3 OND, NCE	1 .3	37 10.3	6 1.7	6 1.7	50 13.9
4 HND, 1 <sup>ST</sup> DEGREE	3 .8	50 13.9	8 2.2	13 3.6	74 20.6
COLUMN	26	265	35	34	360
TOTAL	7.2	73.6	9.7	9.4	100.0
$X^2 = 36.52$		d.f = 15		Significance = .0015	

Table 7, similarly, shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between level of education and awareness of Yoruba newspapers. Some 65.1% of respondents in the Primary School group say “Yes”, 80.4% in the WASC/Technical School group, 74% in the OND/NCE group and 67.6% in the HND/First Degree and above group.

The next point the study sought to establish was whether the respondents read the newspapers.

**Table 8.** Readership Of Yoruba Newspapers By Respondents.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum Percent</b>
No Respond	45	12.5	12.5
YES	227	63.1	43.6
NO	64	24.4	100.0
TOTAL	360	100.0	

Table 8 indicates that majority of the respondents 227 (or 63.15%) read Yoruba newspapers, while 88 (or 24.4%) do not read them.

Again, we examined whether or not variables such as age and educational status are determinants of Yoruba newspaper readership.

The study indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between age and the readership of Yoruba newspapers.



**Table 9.** Cross-Tabulation of Education with Readership of Yoruba Newspapers.

	0 1	YES 2	NO	ROW TOTAL
0	1 .3	12 2.8	2 .6	15 4.2
1 PRY SCH	9 2.5	41 11.4	13 3.68	63 17.5
2 WASCM TECH SCH	18 5.0	101 28.0	39 10.9	158 43.9
3 OND, NCE	6 1.7	34 10.8	24 6.7	50 13.9
4 HND, 1 <sup>ST</sup> DEGREE	11 3.1	39 10.8	24 6.7	74 20.6
COLUMN	45	227	88	360
TOTAL	12.5	63.1	24.4	00.0
$X^2 = 19.55$ $d.f = 10$ $Significance = 0.338$				

Table 9 indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between education and the readership of Yoruba newspapers with the significance level put at .0338. Sixty-five percent of respondents at the Primary School level read the newspapers; 64% in the WASC, Technical School category; 68% at the OND/NCE level and 52.7% respondents in the HND/First Degree and above category. The result indicates that the higher the level of education, the lower the readership of newspapers.

Naturally, the next issue we considered is the frequency of the readership by the respondents.

**Table 10.** Frequency of The Readership of The Newspapers by Respondents.

	Frequency	Percent	Cum. Percent
No Response	91	24.3	25.3
Weekly	74	20.6	45.8
Once a Month	32	8.9	54.7
Occasionally	163	45.3	100.0
	360	100.0	

Table 10 depicts that most people do not read the newspapers regularly. The newspapers are weeklies, if we take people who read them weekly, and perhaps once a month, regarding regular readers, the number of whom is 106 (or 29.5%). One hundred and sixty-three (or 45.3%) read them occasionally.

We then considered the factor of education to discover whether or not it is a determinant in this response.

*Social Status as a Factor for the Readership of Yoruba Newspapers*

**Table 11.** Cross-Tabulation of Education with Readership of Yoruba Newspapers.

		<b>WEEKLY</b>	<b>ONCE A MONTH</b>	<b>OCCASIONALLY</b>	<b>ROW TOTAL</b>
	0	1	2	3	
0	3 .8	5 1.4	1 .3	6 1.7	15 4.2
1 PRY SCH	13 3.6	13 3.6	10 2.8	27 7.5	63 17.5
2 WASC, TECH SCH	25 7.0	35 9.7	16 4.4	82 22.8	158 43.9
3 OND, NCE	16 4.4	11 3.1	4 1.1	19 5.3	50 13.9
4 HND, 1 <sup>ST</sup> DEGREE & ABOVE	34 9.4	10 2.8	1 .3	29 8.1	74 20.6
<b>COLUMN</b>	91	74	32	163	360
<b>TOTAL</b>	25.3	20.6	8.9	45.3	100.0
X <sup>2</sup> = 47.82		d.f = 15		Significance = .0000	

Table 11 reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between education and the frequency of readership of newspapers. Twenty-seven percent and 15.9% of respondents at the primary school level read newspapers weekly and once a month respectively; 22.2% and 10.2% of the WASC/Technical School level; 22% and 8% at the OND/NCE level; and 13.5% and 1.4% at the HND, First degree and above level. The Table informs us that the higher the level of education, the less regular is the readership of the newspapers.

A variable such as the means of obtaining the newspapers for reading may also give us an insight into the kind of attachment people have with these newspapers.

**Table 12.** Distribution of The Means of Obtaining the Newspapers.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum Percent</b>
No Response	93	25.8	25.8
PURCHASE BY SELF	52	14.4	40.3
BORROW	84	23.3	63.6
READ FROM JOINTS/NEWSSTANDS	43	11.9	100.0
BY CHANCE	360	100.0	

Table 12 shows that only 52 (or 14.4%) of the respondents spend their money on the purchase of newspapers. Eighty-four (or 23.3%) borrow, 88 (or 24.4%) read

from a joint, for instance, an office, vendors' stands etc, while another 43 (or 11.9%) simply read them when they come across them by chance.

However, we needed to consider the variable of income level as a factor in this regard.

**Table 13.** Cross-Tabulation of Income Level With the Means of Obtaining the Newspapers.

		<b>PURCHASE BY SELF</b>	<b>BORROW</b>	<b>READ FROM JOINTS</b>	<b>BY CHANCE</b>	<b>ROW TOTAL</b>
	0	1	2	3		
0	13 3.6	1 .3	6 1.7	3 .8		23 6.4
1 01-03	9 2.5	17 4.7	12 3.3	11 3.1	13 3.6	62 17.2
2 04-06	27 7.5	18 5.0	34 9.4	30 8.3	8 2.2	117 32.5
3 07-09	22 6.1	13 3.6	20 5.6	32 8.9	12 3.3	99 27.5
4 10 AND ABOVE	22 6.1	10 .8	1 3.3	29 3.3	74 2.8	59 16.4
<b>COLUMN</b>	93	52	84	88	43	360
<b>TOTAL</b>	25.8	214.4	23.3	24.4	11.9	100.0
		$X^2 = 46.82$		d.f = 16	Significance = .0001	

Table 13 indicates a statistically significant relationship between income level and the means of obtaining newspapers. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents in the 01-03 income level purchase their newspapers; 15.4% in the 04-06 income level; 13% in the 07-09 income level; and 17% at the 10 and above income level. The observation is that the lower the income level, the greater the likelihood of respondents to buy the newspapers. What this connotes is that people with less purchasing power purchase newspapers more frequently. This may sound strange, but when we consider Tables 11 and 12 we find that people of higher education who are most likely to be in higher income level read Yoruba newspapers less and less regularly than the low-income earners.

But what of the people who do not read the newspapers? Can we discover why they do not?

**Table 14.** Why People Do Not Read Yoruba Newspapers.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum Percent</b>
No Response	268	74.4	74.4
Cannot comprehend the language used	24	6.7	81.1
The newspapers are not easily available	53	14.7	95.8
Feel that reading newspapers demeans	7	1.9	97.8

*Social Status as a Factor for the Readership of Yoruba Newspapers*

one's social status			
Feel ashamed about reading newspapers	8	2.2	100.0
	360	100.0	

Of the 92 who responded to this question, 24 indicate they do not read the newspapers because they cannot comprehend the language used; 53 say they do not read because the newspapers are not easily available. The remaining 15 say they do not feel good about being identified with newspapers. Of these fifteen, 7 say they feel that reading newspapers demeans one's status, while the other 8 say they feel ashamed about reading the newspapers.

The variables of age and education were examined to discover whether or not they are factors in the response to this question.

**Table 15.** Cross-Tabulation of Age with Why People Do Not Read Yoruba Newspapers.

		<b>CANNOT COM- PREHEND</b>	<b>NOT EASILY AVAILABLE</b>	<b>DEMEANS ONE'S STATUS</b>	<b>FEEL ASHAMED</b>	<b>ROW TOTAL</b>
	0	1	2	3	4	
0	1 .3	1 .3	2 .6			4 1.1
1 11-15	3 .8		1 .3			4 1.1
2 16-25	31 8.6	8 2.2	2 .6	1 .3	3 .8	45 12.5
3 26-35	65 18.1	5 1.4	20 5.6	4 1.1	1 .3	96 26.4
4 36-45	99 27.5	5 1.4	18 5.0	1 .3	4 1.1	127 35.3
5 46+	69 19.2	1 1.4	10 2.8	1 .3		85 23.6
<b>COLUMN</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>360</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74.4</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>
		$X^2 = 36.05$	d.f = 20	Significance = .0151		

Table 15 depicts that there is statistically significant relationship between age and why people do not read Yoruba newspapers with the level of significance put at .0151. Two percent and 6.7 % of the respondents of the 16-25 age group say reading Yoruba newspapers demeans their status and makes them feel ashamed, respectively; 4.2% and 1.0 % for the 26-35 category; 0.8% and 3.1% for the 36-45 group; and 1.2% and nil for 46 and above age group. The observation is that the younger the age, the more likely the respondents are to not feel good about being identified with newspapers.

The study also reveals no statistically significant relationship between education and why people do not read Yoruba newspapers.

**Table 16.** Responses to Whether or not Publishing of Yoruba Newspapers Should Continue.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum. percent</b>
No response	64	17.8	17.8
YES	259	71.9	89.7
NO	22	6.1	95.7
INDIFFERENT	15	4.2	100.0
	360	100.0	

Finally, we considered whether or not respondents want the publishing of Yoruba newspapers to continue.

According to Table 16, an overwhelming majority, 259 (or 71.9%) of the respondents want the publishing of the newspapers to continue. Some 22 (or 6.1%) do not want it continued, while 15 (or 4.2%) are simply indifferent and 64 (17.8%) did not respond.

We also felt it necessary to consider the variables of age and education to find whether or not they are factors in this regard. The study depicts no statistically significant relationship between age and desire to have the publishing of the newspapers continued.

**Table 17.** Cross-Tabulation of Education with Desire to Have the Publishing of the Newspapers Continued.

	0	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>INDIFFERENT</b>	<b>ROW TOTAL</b>
0	2 .6	12 3.3		1 .3	15 4.2
1 PRY SCH	16 4.4	42 11.7	4 1.1	1 .3	63 17.5
2 WASC, TECH SCH	37 10.3	105 29.2	12 3.4	1 .3	158 43.9
3 OND, NCE	3 .8	40 11.1	2 .6	5 1.4	50 13.9
4 HND, 1 <sup>st</sup> DEGREE	6 1.7	60 16.7	4 1.1	4 1.1	74 20.6
COLUMN	64	259	22	15	360
TOTAL	17.8	71.8	6.1	4.2	100.0
$X^2 = 25.64$ d.f = 15                      Significance = .0420					

Table 17 indicates a statistically significant relationship between education and the desire to have the publishing of the newspapers continued with the significance level put at .0420.

### 3. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From this study we have been able to establish that social status is a factor in the readership of Yoruba newspapers. For instance, the higher the age, the more the respondents were likely to be aware of Yoruba newspapers. This indicates the young who claim to be 'modern' are not interested in indigenous language media. A further probing equally indicates that the younger the age, the more likely the respondents are to not feel good about being identified with Yoruba newspapers. Again, we found that the higher the level of education, the lower the readership of newspapers. This means that the more (western) education a respondent acquires, the more likely he is not to be able to operate (speak or read) in the local languages; and, of course, the more his interest in local language and culture will wane. Similarly, the study informs us that the higher the level of education, the less regular the readership of Yoruba newspapers. The study also reveals that people with a higher education level, who are most likely to be in the higher income level, read the Yoruba newspapers less and less regularly than the low-income earners.

What is, however, of importance is that while most of the respondents say they read the newspapers and indicate an interest in their continued publishing, the variables of age, education, income (which confer social status) indicate the varying levels of readership and interest in the local newspapers. This has a serious implication for the survival of the indigenous language and the indigenous language press. Aniche (1997: 73–79) graphically demonstrates how fast the Nigerian languages are dying out among Nigerian children. According to her, one research shows a national average of 7 percent of secondary school students, while another shows a 30 percent figure of primary school pupils (in the Rivers state), all of whom are unable to speak their ancestral language. With this trend she suggests that most Nigerian languages are likely to be teetering on the brink of extinction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which would bring with it very grave socio-political and economic consequences.

It is also particularly as a result of lack of interest on the part of the elites in the indigenous language and the indigenous language press that the press does not enjoy patronage, even in terms of advertisements (Salawu 1993; Dare 1990).

This paper, therefore, concludes with a call to the Nigerian government to take more seriously the implementation of the National Policy on Education of 1979, revised in 1981, which stipulates that pre-primary and junior primary classes be conducted in the language of the immediate community and that there should be further study of two Nigerian languages as subjects in the Junior Secondary School (JSS). Similarly, the government should consider the promotion of a reading culture essentially in indigenous languages as a (development) programme that should be pursued vigorously.

## REFERENCES

- Aniche, C.O. 1997.  
*Nigerian Languages Die? Quarterly Review*, October–December.  
Lagos.
- Awoniyi, A. 1995.  
Determining Language in Education Policy: The Dilemma in Africa.  
In: Kola Owolabi (ed.), *Language in Nigeria, Essays in Honour of Ayo Bangbose*. Ibadan: Group Publishers.
- Dare, O. 1990.  
The Role of the Nigerian Mass Media in National Rural Development and Transformation. In: L. Oso and L. Adebayo (eds.),  
*Communication and Rural Development in Nigeria*. Abeokuta: Millennium Investments Ltd.
- Eyoh, H. N. 1986.  
*Theatre of Relevance: An Interview with Ngugi Wa Thiongo'o'*.  
**African Theatre Review**, 1(2): 110–114. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Federal Ministry of Information 1977.  
*Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education*. (Revised in 1981).
- Ngugi, W. T. 1993.  
*Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. London: James Currey.
- 1986 *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey.
- Ogenyi, L. C. 2002.  
*Literacy and Language Policy in Nigeria. Literacy and Reading in Nigeria*, 9(1). Reading Association of Nigeria.
- Salawu, A. S. 1993.  
*A Study of Selected Vernacular Newspapers in Nigeria*. Unpublished M.Sc. thesis, University of Lagos.
- Udosen, A. E. 2002.  
*Towards the Enhancement of Literacy in the Ibibio Language at the Primary School Level. Literacy and Reading in Nigeria*, 9(2).
- Wright, C. 1986.  
*Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective*. New York: Random House.
- 1975 Social Structure and Mass Communication Behavior: Exploring Patterns through Constructional Analysis. In: L. Coser (ed.), *The Idea of Social Structure: Paper in Honor of Robert K. Merton*, pp. 370–413. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

*Social Status as a Factor for the Readership of Yoruba Newspapers*

**About the author:** Dr Abiodun Salawu's major research interests are the Indigenous Language Press and Development Communication. He has to his credit several journal articles and book chapters, both nationally and internationally. He is currently working on a book on the Indigenous Language Press in Africa.