Original Research Article

Gender and Reading Preference of Undergraduate Students of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria

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This study aims to ascertain reading preferences of both male and female undergraduate students of the Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Nigeria. To spotlight the types of books they read, where they carry out their reading activities, factors motivating them to read and identify the problems militating against the reading preferences of students. The study employed a descriptive survey method and questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The population of the study consisted of all the students that registered with polytechnic library. A purposive sampling technique was adopted in the study, that is, only those students found in the library during the period of the study were used. One hundred and fifty (150) students used the library during the period of this study and were subsequently used for the study. It was revealed from the study that students of both sexes read their Lecture note, Course textbooks, past question papers and online resources in this order more than other reading materials. To pass the examination, to build my future career, to aid research and to be up to date are the major factors motivating both male and female students to read. High cost of books/ reading materials, overcrowded academic activities, inadequate books / materials in the school library, poor reading culture/ orientation among others are the major problems militating against students reading preferences. The study concludes that to build a literate and enlighten society, students must learn to develop interest in information materials aside their course work or field of study. The study recommended that the polytechnic management should re-visit the school academic calendar to ensure that academic and social activities taken place in the school are properly accommodated to give students enough time to read not only for examination but also for pleasure.

Key words: Gender, Reading Preferences, Examination, Auchi Polytechnic Students, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Adomi (1997) defined reading as the act of extracting meaning from printed or written matter which plays an important role in the daily lives of most people, especially students. The scholars stressed that learning is the basic tool to successful learning in school. Reading is an activity which helps to develop the mind and personality of human beings, enriches their intellectual lives. It provides an insight into human problems. It influences the readers' behavior and attitudes, book do and actually influences our look. In the case of children, the ideas that they absorb from determining the kind of people they will be. In other words, reading helps to mold their character. This, of course, emphasized the need for reading the right type of books, which entertain and at the same time inform and educate (Busayo, 2005).

A reading environment should be created to achieve a society aware of the benefits to be derived from reading and in which books are made accessible to all (Unesco, 1982). Reading is absolutely indispensable tool of learning. Reading,

no doubt, makes a complete and adequate scholar. Students irrespective of sexes, ages and levels should be encouraged to cultivate the reading habit in order to widen their knowledge. Reading is not just for school, but also for life (Ifedili, 2009). The author further opines that many teachers often complain about the reading habits or preference of their students. Edomwandagbon (2005) held tenaciously to the view that if students who were preparing for both internal and external examinations avail themselves of facilities in the various libraries and read them, cheating, impersonation and examination malpractice and cultism will be greatly reduced.

Omo-Ojugo (2005) states that the world bank in conjunction with the Nigerian Institute for social and Economic research Ibadan produced a grim report on the Nigerian graduate which has confirmed the fears of educators, parents, employers and the general public about the degeneration of the country's education. The report revealed that the average graduate who leaves a university or polytechnic with a degree

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or certificate is not worth the qualification which he is supposed to have. The report concluded that average Nigerian graduate lack skills, has a poor command of English, is poorly trained and largely unemployable.

Statement of the problem

Reading is very vital to students' academic success and creation of sound minds and literate society that gives room for national development. Both male and female students require effective reading to meet up with their academics. Reading for the enlighten mind goes beyond the school program. It is the way of life. To stop reading is to stop updating and to stop updating in an ever changing world is to start decaying (Ugwu, 2008). Identifying the reading preference of both male and female students will have a tremendous significance on the polytechnic, the nation and the students themselves. In Nigeria, the standard of education has fallen tremendously.

Several attempts to predict the academic performance of students have not really focused on gender and students reading preference. It is against this background that this study attempts to investigate gender and reading preferences of undergraduate students of Auchi polytechnic Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

1. To ascertain the types of books/materials male and female students read
2. To find out the places male and female students carry out their reading
3. To determine the factors that influences male and female students to read
4. To discover the problems militating against male and female students reading preferences

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in this research work.

1. What are the types of books/materials male and female students read?
2. Where do male and female students carry out their reading?
3. What are the factors influencing male and female students to read?
4. What are the problems militating against reading preference of male and female students?

Literature Review

Books/Materials students read

Edem and Ofre (2010) posits that internet being the global system of interconnected computers, provides many benefits such as access to information from distant documents and databases that can be read and studied to improve knowledge.

Adomi (1997) opines that most students obtain reading from friends and the main library. Gallik (1999) found that magazine was the most popular type of reading materials for pleasure reading and reported that 75% of the college students read them. Uche and Udo-Anyanwu (2009) carried out a study of the reading habits of students in three private secondary schools in Owerri and asked question on materials students preferred to read. They reported that out of 148 students, 26% preferred textbooks, 37% notebooks, 14% fiction/ novel, and 2% preferred periodicals. Worthy, Moorman and Turner (1999) conducted a survey of reading preferences and found that boys preferred to read comics, magazine and scary stories. Shen (2006) carried out a research on the topics students like to read and reported that entertainment.

Places students read their books/materials

UNESCO (1982) acknowledges the influence of home, school, teachers and society in helping learners to develop desirable reading interest and attitude. Sommer (1968) cited by Adomi (1997) noted from that dormitories lounges, cafeterias empty classrooms, and outdoor areas. Adomi (1997) carried out a survey on why and where university students read and discovered that they read mostly in the libraries, their room in halls of residence, home and empty lecture hall or room. Noah (1989) carried out a survey on the reasons students used the story books, to read newspapers/magazines, to write letters, that order and reason given for not using the library include, I don't have time and the library is far from home respectively.

Factors motivating students to read

UNESCO (1982) noted that African reads first and foremost to learn and improve himself and as a result of his arduous reading and do not develop a taste for re-creative reading. Onwubiko (1985) conducted a survey on why the intellectuals (Library educators and, practicing librarians) read books and journals. On journal reading, results were obtained based on the following reasons: to aid research, for reference, for recreation and to keep abreast with the new discoveries. All the library educators and most of the practicing librarians (80%) read journals in order to aid research as well as to keep abreast of new discoveries (86%). As for the practicing librarians, journal is rarely used for recreational and reference purpose by these intellectuals. The study conducted by Onwubiko revealed that library educators read textbooks for reference, for study, for vocational advancement but not for recreation. Uche and Udo-Anyanwu (2009) revealed from their study that students read to pass examination with 119 (80%) ranked first, to widen knowledge with 26(18%) ranked second, while for recreation 2 (1%), Home work 1 (1%) and to prepare for quiz had no response. Adomi (1997) posits that students read to occupy positions of prestige in the society, to increase their knowledge, experience, pleasure, trade and to pass examinations. Local media in Malaysia posited that students read to pass examinations and that they do not read for pleasure (Kaur & Thiyagarajah, 1999).

Results and Discussions

Table1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

SEX	NO	%
MALE	67	45
FEMALE	83	55
TOTAL	150	100

Source: fieldwork, 2015

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents, with 83 (83%) females and 67(45%) males. This study clearly shows that, female students used the library more than male counterparts during the time of the study. The study recorded low library patronage from both sexes.

Research Question One

What are the types of books/materials male and female students read most?

Table 2: Types of Books/Materials male and female students read.

Materials	Sex	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Course textbooks	Female	72	87	11	13	-----	----	83	100
	Male	55	82	12	18	----	----	67	100
Novels	Female	49	59	19	23	15	18	83	100
	Male	46	69	19	28	2	3	67	100
Almanac	Female	34	41	20	24	29	35	83	100
	Male	21	31	19	28	27	40	67	100
Online resources	Female	50	60	12	15	21	25	83	100
	Male	44	66	15	22	8	12	67	100
Magazine/newspapers	Female	34	41	20	24	29	35	83	100
	Male	41	61	18	27	8	12	67	100
Lecture note	Female	75	90	---	---	8	10	83	100
	Male	57	85	10	15	--	--	67	100
Library text books/ materials	Female	33	40	38	46	12	15	83	100
	Male	19	28	31	46	17	25	67	100
Encyclopedia/ Dictionaries	Female	34	41	14	17	35	42	83	100
	Male	36	54	12	18	19	28	67	100
Project / Thesis	Female	29	35	41	49	13	16	83	100
	Male	18	27	49	73	--	--	67	100
Journals / Conference Papers	Female	27	33	33	40	23	28	83	100
	Male	24	36	30	45	13	19	67	100
Past question papers	Female	67	80	9	11	7	8	83	100
	Male	51	76	10	15	6	9	67	100

Source: fieldwork, 2015

Table 2 presents the types of books / materials male and female students read. Both male and female students agreed that they read their lecture notes more than any other materials with 75(90%) females and 57 (85%) males. This is closely followed by course textbooks with 72 (87%) females and 55 (82%) males. Past question papers came third with 67 (80%) females and 51 (76%) males. Male students consult online resources more than their female counterparts with 44 (66%) males and 50 (60%) females. It is obvious from the study that students read materials directly connected to their course of study more than other reading materials. These findings corroborate the study of Adomi (1997) who reported from the study of the types of books/materials, students prefer to read and that textbooks rank highest followed by Lecture note.

Research Question two

Where do male and female students read?

Table 3: Places Students of both sexes carried out their reading activities

Places	Sex	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Polytechnic Library	Female	61	73	--	--	22	27	83	100
	Male	53	79	11	16	3	5	67	100
Departmental Library	Female	27	33	56	67	-	-	83	100
	Male	15	22	49	73	3	5	67	100
In My Room	Female	77	92	6	7	---	---	83	100
	Male	55	82	12	18	---	---	67	100
my Classroom/department	Female	49	59	11	13	23	28	83	100
	Male	41	61	17	25	9	13	67	100
Under the trees /shade	Female	24	29	29	35	30	36	83	100
	Male	17	25	36	54	14	21	67	100

Source: fieldwork, 2015

Table 3 shows the places students of Auchi polytechnic carried out their reading activities. Both sexes agreed that they carry out most of their reading in their room, with 77(92%) females and 55 (82%) males. The polytechnic library ranked second with 53(79%) males and 61 (73%) females. This finding corroborates the study of Adomi (1997) who carried out a comparative study on why and where Educational and Art students read and revealed that students read most in their room or hall of residence, and the school library.

Research Question three

What are the factors motivating male and female students to read?

Table 4: Factors motivating male and female students read.

Factors	Sex	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
To pass examination	Female	77	93	---	---	6	7	83	100
	Male	59	88	8	12	--	--	67	100
To broaden my horizon	Female	33	40	31	37	19	23	83	100
	Male	16	24	24	36	27	40	67	100
To improve my language proficiency	Female	26	31	32	39	25	30	83	100
	Male	19	28	33	49	15	22	67	100
To enhance my spiritual growth	Female	24	29	19	23	40	48	83	100
	Male	14	21	22	33	31	46	67	100
To develop critical thinking and mature judgment	Female	26	31	57	69	--	--	83	100
	Male	12	18	25	37	30	45	67	100
To build my future career	Female	68	82	15	18	--	--	83	100
	Male	56	84	11	16	--	--	67	100
To be up to date	Female	49	59	11	13	23	28	83	100
	Male	42	63	7	8	18	27	67	100
To aid research	Female	51	61	16	19	16	19	83	100
	Male	47	70	15	22	5	7	67	100

Source: fieldwork, 2015

Table 4 shows the actors that motivate male and female students to read. Both sexes agreed that to pass examination ranked highest with 77 (93%) females and 59 (88%) males. To build my future career came second with 56 (84%) males and 68 (82%) females. To aid research came third with 47 (70%) males and 51 (61%) females. To be up to date ranked fourth with 42 (63%) males and 49 (59%) females. These findings agree greatly with the work of Adomi (1997) who stated that people read for the following reasons: to enable them occupy positions of prestige in the society, to increase their knowledge, to widen experience, for trade and occupation growth and to pass the examination.

Research Question four

What are the problems militating against the reading preference of male and female students?

Table 5: Problems Militating Against Students Reading Preference.

Problems	Sex	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
High cost of books/ reading materials	Female	77	93	6	7	--	--	83	100
	Male	60	90	7	10	-	-	67	100
Poor reading culture/ orientation	Female	66	80	---	---	11	30	83	100
	Male	51	76	16	24	--	--	67	100
Inadequate books / materials in the school Library	Female	61	74	3	4	19	23	83	100
	Male	58	87	6	9	3	4	61	100
Overcrowded Academic activities	Female	74	89	--	--	9	11	83	100
	Male	57	85	4	6	6	9	67	100
High Cost of accessing electronic materials	Female	54	65	17	21	12	14	83	100
	Male	49	73	18	27	---	---	67	100
Lack of functional e-learning centre /e-library in my school	Female	63	76	20	24	--	--	83	100
	Male	52	78	15	22	--	--	67	100

Source: fieldwork, 2015

Table 5 shows the problems militating against the reading preferences of both sexes of students. High cost of books/ reading materials ranked first from both sexes with 77 (93%) females and 60 (90%) males. Overcrowded academic activities ranked second from both sexes with 74 (89%) females and 57 (85%) males. Inadequate books / materials in the school Library   also receive high response with 58 (87%) males and 61 (74%) females. While, Poor reading culture/ orientation was also responded to by a majority of both sexes of respondents with 66 (80%) females and 51 (76%) males. Other problems that receive positive response are: Lack of functional e-learning centre in my school 52 (78%) males and 63 (76%) females and High Cost of accessing electronic materials with 49 (73%) males and 54 (65%) females. It is clear from the study that the entire problems outline for the study militates against both male and female Auchi polytechnic students reading preference.

Problems militating against students reading preference

Lack of availability of information sources to the steady proliferation of universities: federal, state and private along with increases in students, and faculty, and the diversification of courses and academic and research programmes, without adequate information sources to meet the actual and information needs (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2002). Ajayi and Akinniyi

(2004) reported frustration among information seekers due to the non-availability of sources. Aina (1985) analyzed the availability of periodical titles used in Nigerian libraries, reporting that only 67 (11.5%) of the 578 periodical titles studied were not available in any of the major libraries and confirming a high availability. Oyediran – Tidings (2004) studied information needs of library users at the Yaba College of Technology, Lagos and observed low use of the library by the students, which was attributed to the expressed unavailability of desired information resources comfortable furniture and people moving around. Reading culture among Nigeria students has become issues of interest and discourse and rather than improving it seems to be degenerating as students would prefer to watch home videos than to read newspapers or other relevant reading materials (Edem & Ofre, 2010). Commeyras (2001) opined the pathetic situation for the average Nigerian hungry for knowledge but incapacitated by economic and social inhibitions. Ifedili (2009) listed the following as problems militating against a good reading habit or preference: hunger, inadequately furnished library, books were expensive, inadequate instructional facilities, poverty. Many students take only a meal a day and thus, according to them affected their general performance due to inadequate energy to read. Poor accommodation was also mentioned as a factor militating against students' reading ability. If a room is meant for two students ends up housing up to 8 – 10 students, the

discomfort will set in, which will certainly have chain effect. The author stressed that, because of constant power failure, the library is often hot and most of the reference books are not there.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey method to investigate the gender difference on reading preferences of students of Auchi polytechnic Auchi, Nigeria. The population for the study comprises of all the registered students of Auchi polytechnic. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study, only the students that were found in the library within the period of the study were used for the study. A total number of one hundred and fifty students (150) were found in the library within the period of the study and were subsequently used for the study. A questionnaire entitled "Gender and reading preference of undergraduate students of Auchi polytechnic, questionnaire (GRPUSQ)"was used as the instrument for data collection and was made up of two parts. The first part consists of biographical data such as gender. The second part contains structured statements aimed at eliciting data on the reading preferences of male and female students of Auchi polytechnic.

Findings of the study

- Lecture note, course textbooks, past question papers and online resources in this order are some of the reading materials students read or consult most.
- Male students consult or read magazine /newspapers and encyclopedia / dictionary than their female counterparts.
- My room, polytechnic Library and my classroom/department in this order are the places both male and female students carry out most their reading activities.
- To pass the examination, to build my future career, to aid research and to be up to date are the major factors motivating both male and female students to read.
- High cost of books/reading materials, overcrowded academic activities, inadequate books/materials in the school library, poor reading culture/ orientation, lack of functional e-learning centre/e-library in my school and high cost of accessing electronic materials are the major problems militating against students reading preference.

Conclusion

Reading is not meant to pass examination alone, but a lifelong activity. Scholars have posited that readers are leaders irrespective of sex. The findings of this survey further revealed that a vast majority of Auchi polytechnic students of both sexes reads to a large extent to pass examination. And as such, they concentrate on reading examination related materials. That is to say, they read to pass examination using their rooms or hall of residence mostly as their reading place. They attributed choice of their reading preference to the following reasons: high cost of books/ reading materials, overcrowded academic activities, inadequate books / materials in the school library, poor reading culture/ orientation, lack of functional e-learning centre/e- library in my school and high cost of accessing electronic materials. To build a literate and enlighten society,

students must learn to develop interest for information materials aside their course work or field of study.

Recommendations

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

- Polytechnic management and library administrators should embark on building functional e- library and complete automation of polytechnic library processes to enable students to have unrestricted access to electronic materials that are freely available online or make available from the library server to produce students with 21st century mentality.
- Government should put measures in place to improve the economic situation of the country because it will go a long way to alleviating the high cost of living in the country and enable students to have access or acquire any reading materials of their choice.
- The polytechnic management should ensure that the polytechnic library is equipped with relevant and adequate materials to meet the information needs of the entire departments in the school.
- The polytechnic management should re-visit the school academic calendar to ensure that academic and social activities taken place in the school are properly accommodated to give students enough time to read not only for examination but also for pleasure.
- The polytechnic management should organize at regular interval seminar and workshop to sensitize the students on the need to imbibe the habit of constant reading not only to pass examination but also for pleasure.

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