

Awareness and Experience of School Library as Determinants of Library Usage among University of Lagos Undergraduates

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Abstract

The school library, being the first possible contact of students, intimates them with the common roles, functions and services offered by libraries during their primary and secondary education. Yet, some students still find it hard to make effective use of the academic library during college/university years. This study investigates awareness and experience of school library as determinants of library usage among University of Lagos undergraduates. The study used a survey research design and a pure quantitative method was adopted. Samples were selected from a population of 28,603 undergraduates within 300-600 level from nine faculties and the College of Medicine, using a multi-stage random technique and 394 respondents were selected. Questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. The collected data was analysed, using descriptive statistics and hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Step-wise Multiple Regression analysis. The findings have revealed a large extent of school library awareness and experience and University library usage among the respondents. Also, their school library awareness and experience, individually and jointly, determine their library usage. The study

concludes that early exposure to, and awareness of, library experiences among the University of Lagos undergraduates accounts for their library usage later in life. So it is recommended that primary and secondary school students should be exposed to, and be made aware of the presence of libraries in their schools by establishing standard libraries in these schools, as required by the National Policy on Education, as the basic prerequisite, among others.

Keywords: Awareness, Experience, Library usage, School library, University of Lagos, Nigeria

Introduction

Library processes, particularly at the university level, can be so complex, especially in academic libraries that an average user may not easily comprehend. It is important to explain the workings to a new user in detail to be able to exploit the available resources maximally. User education and outreach service provide a platform where librarians introduce new students to the complexities of university library facilities and to popularise it to those who have little or no information seeking skills at all, with a broad range of resources to develop their library skills; and to educate them on how to find materials using the catalogues, subject indexes, CD-ROMs, and the Internet. Before getting introduced to the academic library, most users must have passed through a primary and secondary school, which may or may not have a school library. School library is a type of library found in primary and post-primary institutions, where educational services are offered to patrons of the library in support of their teaching and learning responsibilities.

Adeniji (2006) views the school library as the heart and soul of the educational system, as it provides the necessary impetus to all categories of learners in schools from the slowest learner in the kindergarten to the most intelligent senior in the high school by providing print and non-print materials to aid learning. Smith (2002) opines that it is the backbone of functional education without which academic excellence cannot be achieved. Obviously, both the library and the school are inseparable twins that one ceases to function well without the other. Ironically, one still finds in Nigeria, some primary and secondary schools which are the first entry points to the world of academics being run without libraries.

Yet, literacy is considered as fundamental to all areas of the school curriculum, which makes it imperative to have a strong middle school literacy programme to help the students to realise their academic potentials to the fullest. One factor that many proponents of literacy programme for struggling readers seem to agree on is a strong school library. (Bleidt, 2011) Kaushamalika, Arachchige, and Weerakoon (2018) recommend that a comprehensive information literacy program

should be conducted to promote awareness and use of electronic information resources; underscoring the need for awareness in achieving the much desired experience for the continual usage of the library.

However, library usage will be contingent to a large extent on whether or not the individuals have an idea or knowledge about the existence and usefulness of the entity called library, particularly that in the school environment. This is because there are chances that the individual will tend to explore based on knowledge of, and the belief about the potential use of a facility; since the concept of awareness itself has to do with knowledge or perception of a situation or fact, this time, about the library in primary and post-primary schools. The presumption upon which this study stands therefore, is that earlier awareness and/or library experience of the undergraduate students has a role to play in whether or not they use the university library.

Thus, Edeama (2015) state that the school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. There is a similarity in the type of collections, information formats, structure, arrangement and services in the school library and the academic library. Just as the primary and post-primary institutions provide the foundation and background for learning for the pupils/students before going to tertiary institutions, the school library should also perform the function of providing foundation and background knowledge on the use of library, its structure, arrangement and services.

The school library is a central hub supporting every student and staff member, combining several elements, which include staff, resources, and space, each playing an important role in supporting teaching and learning and they are most effective when these elements combine to form an integrated whole (Gunasekara, 2014). The purpose of a school library is to help every member of the school community to gain new knowledge, skills, and dispositions for learning and personal development that could be used throughout life. It is a part of school's teaching and learning environment, providing resources and services to support students, staff, and families. This is because its resources, physical space, and staff have tremendous potentials to make a difference to students' achievement, educational equity, and their social and emotional well-being. Thus, school libraries have been said to have a positive impact on students' literacy and learning outcomes.

In spite of the significant role that the libraries have the capacity to play, observations have revealed that not many undergraduate students have favourable disposition towards the use of their university libraries; owing to probably the absence of early exposure to libraries particularly in their primary and secondary schools, as many seem to have their very first contact with the library at the university. Awareness is therefore considered as a prerequisite to the library

experience, which can only come through an early exposure to it. It is against this background that this study sought to determine the influence of awareness and experience of library on library usage by the undergraduate students of the University of Lagos.

Statement of the Problem

The school library being the first possible contact of students, intimates them with the common roles, functions and services offered by libraries all through their primary and secondary education. The school library guides the students in all areas of their academic endeavour and inculcates in them the desired reading culture before graduating from secondary schools. It therefore serves as the first possible contact by students with the library and their perception of the school library, its image, services and importance, goes a long way in making them lifelong learners and potential users of other library types. Yet, some students still find it hard to make effective use of the academic library during their college or university years; as supported by the findings of Chimah, Nwajei, and Akom (2015), which have revealed that, at least 75% of undergraduates become anxious during their initial library research experiences.

They described their initial interaction with libraries in terms of fear and anxiety, confusion, overwhelmed by a feeling of being lost, scared, overpowered and helpless. One then begins to wonder if the phobia for the academic library is because of the presence or absence of the school library or its nature, or students regard the library as a place rather than being an information resource centre. Nicholas et al. (2015) identified lack of confidence about knowing how to begin research, lack of knowledge about how to navigate the library accompanied by feelings of inadequacy, fear of asking for assistance, as major hurdles faced by many university students; lack of interaction between the library staff and the users as some of the major gaps, and that the greater the levels of unfamiliarity with the library, the greater the levels of anxiety among non-users. This could be as a result of the lack of awareness and experience with the school library and school library services before getting into the university.

Consequently, there is the need to conduct a study on the effects of school libraries on students, who intend to graduate from schools in Nigeria as this would strengthen the need for every school in Nigeria to be equipped with standard school libraries. Thus, this study seeks to examine the relationship existing between the awareness and experience of a school library with the usage of the university library by undergraduates of University of Lagos.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered:

- i. What is the extent of school library awareness among University of Lagos undergraduate students?
- ii. What is the extent of school library experience among University of Lagos undergraduate students?
- iii. What is the extent of library usage among University of Lagos undergraduate students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.01 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between school library awareness and library usage among University of Lagos undergraduate students.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between school library experience and library usage among University of Lagos undergraduate students.

Literature Review

The primary concern of the library has always been the communication of knowledge, ideas and thoughts from one person, group of persons or generation to another. It provides access to important, relevant and well organized information. A typical school library's mission and goal are to ensure that all the members of the school have equitable access to books, reading space, information, and to information technology and they are able to use them effectively. Students are gradually becoming less aware of the roles and benefits of a school library or services offered as a result of lack of it in their schools. In spite of the uses of the school library, there is gross neglect of it in Nigeria, due to factors such as lack of accommodation, finance, qualified staff (Adebamowo, 2011); lack of adequate resources, poor accommodation and condition of materials, non ICT integrated libraries (Adeyemi, 2010); proper staffing (Owate&Okpa, 2013); lack of professional librarian, up-to-date facilities/resources and poor accommodation (Udo-Ilomechine, 2008). Scholastic (2016) suggests that having a qualified school librarian, a well-developed library collection, and collaboration and co-teaching between the teacher librarian and teaching staff all elevate student learning.

Moruf (2015) reports that there are some functional libraries in some schools in Oyo State, Nigeria, especially private schools as against the largely non-functional ones in most public schools; 58.3%(private with libraries) and 41.7%(public with libraries). Odusanya and Amusa (2002) have observed that functional school libraries are virtually non-existence in Nigerian public secondary

schools and students do not see school library as beneficial to education. Arua and Chinaka (2011) revealed that there is awareness that library exists in the schools as all respondents used the library; with 79 of them who uses it always while 271 used it occasionally; even as accommodation adequacy had 150 responses.

Users' experience with the library plays a pivotal role in their continuous use of the library in the future. School libraries have developed a wide range of services to meet the educational objectives of their parent institutions. According to Nwalo (2003), the library user is undisputedly, the most important person in any library setting. Users experience with the library plays a pivotal role in their continuous use of the library in the future. Moruf (2015) noted that the problem of staffing was part of the constraints to effective use of school libraries in Akinyele Local Government as there are more library assistants/attendants than professional school librarians.

With the right resources, school libraries can facilitate cross-communication and enhance collaboration between students, teachers, administrators, and families (Scholastic, 2016). Kiilu and Otike (2016) mention convenience in seeking information, relevance of content or resources to meet their information needs, sustained user engagement to close communication gap and the provision various learning spaces in the library to meet the different learning styles of the users as ways to entice users to patronize library services.

Cribb and Holt (2012) note in most of the comments concerning students' experiences about library use indicating that they rely on Internet and personal library and books, rather than the school library. However, private schools tend to have more generous facilities, as 72% of private high schools have a library, often with a librarian. Almost 50% of the students come from private schools. Only 31% indicate that they have been using the school library for their research and homework. However, 20% seek help from their school librarian for their research and homework, indicating less dependence, help or trust from the librarian. Ogunbawo, Issa, Akinboro and Abdulsalam (2020) highlight the extent of school library awareness and experience and its possible effects on the library usage of undergraduate students, concluding that the awareness and experience gained from the school library exposure are capable of assisting the students to become better users of the academic libraries and the vice-versa.

Use of Academic Library by the Undergraduate Students

Despite the changes, upgrade and regular reviews of library services, academic libraries are at crossroads. While there is a growing perception that the physical library is no longer essential to the educational experience since students increasingly rely on technology for learning and communication (Gardner & Eng,

2005). Iyoro (2004) has identified accessibility as one of the pre-requisites of information used by undergraduates.

There has also been a declining trend in library usage generally leading to an increase in library non-users; a phenomenon observed, to include university and college libraries (Toner, 2008). Students prefer information that is simple and easy to understand, through a self-serve method. There is a lack of seamlessness in services at the library that prevents some potential patrons from using the library (Becker, 2009). Fadekemi and Samuel (2009) have adduced reasons for using a university library. For them, majority of respondents used it to read and study for research, to borrow books, sleep and socialize, respectively and then for entertainment and leisure.

Fadekemi and Samuel (2009) note that the problem of Nigerian students is not their desire to use the college library, but whether or not the university library can provide for their needs, and whether there is access to what is provided. At multivariate level, factors such as student year of study and type sponsorship are significantly associated with library use after adjusting for age, gender, type of department and distance to student residence. There is also the need to identify factors associated with Library usage among undergraduate students in both Public and Private Universities in Kenya (Koech, Maureen, Korir, Mutai, Kimeli, Rutto, & Arusei, 2015).

Methodology

A survey research method is adopted using pure quantitative method for answering the research questions and testing the research hypotheses. Study's population comprises the 28,603 returning undergraduate students (300-600 level) of University of Lagos (2013/2014- 2016/2017 academic sessions) within nine faculties and the College of Medicine, undergoing four to six-year programmes. A multi stage random sampling technique (comprising stratified, purposive and convenience techniques) are used. Adopting the Israel (2003) model, 394 have been selected as the study's sample. A self-designed structured questionnaire, content and face-validated by experts in the field was used for data collection. It has been divided into two sections: Section A Respondents' demographic information and Section B: items sub-divided into 3 parts based on the research objectives. Administering the questionnaire was personally done with the assistance of one or two respondents from the participating faculties.

Response Rate

Out of the 394 copies of the questionnaire administered, completed and returned, 391 copies were found usable for the analysis, giving a 99% response rate.

Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) version 21.0, while the inferential statistics, namely: the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, was used to test the hypotheses of this study.

Data Analysis and Results

The distributions of data collected from respondents are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents based their Faculty(N=391)

Faculties	Percentage	
	Frequency	%
Arts	39	10.0
Business Administration	39	10.0
Education	39	10.0
Engineering	39	10.0
Environmental Sciences	39	10.0
Law	39	10.0
Sciences	39	10.0
Social Sciences	39	10.0
Pharmaceutical Sciences	39	10.0
College of Medicine	40	10.2
Total	391	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 shows the spread of respondents across the various faculties and each having 10% of the total respondent composition. A total of 391 respondents were selected with 39 students as the sample for each faculty and 40 for the College of Medicine. From the total of 391 respondents, 51.9% are females and 48.1% are males, with 46% in 300 level, 47.8% in 400 level, only 4.6% in 500 level and 8% in 600 level respectively.

Table 2: Awareness of the Availability of School Libraries(N=391)

Awareness on School library	Available		Not available	
	Freq.	Per. %	Freq.	Per. %
Primary school library availability awareness	225	(57.5%)	166	(42.5%)
Secondary school library awareness	317	(81.1%)	74	(18.9%)

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 shows the respondents' awareness regarding availability of school libraries in their primary and secondary schools. It reveals that 57.5% respondents had it in their primary schools while 42.5% and 81.1% in their secondary schools while the remaining 18.9% had none at all.

Table 3: Awareness of School Libraries' Resources and Facilities(N=391)

Items	Aware		Not Aware	
	Freq.	Per. %	Freq.	Per. %
Location of the library	335	(85.7)	56	(14.3)
Services offered	277	(70.8)	114	(29.2)
Availability of library resources	254	(65.0)	137	(35.0)
Availability of library facilities	256	(65.5)	135	(34.5)
Conducive/Convenient environment	306	(78.3)	85	(21.7)
Presence of librarian	280	(71.6)	111	(28.4)
Arrangement of library	286	(73.1)	105	(26.9)
Layout of library	249	(63.7)	142	(36.3)

Source: Field Survey

Respondents' awareness of their school libraries is presented in Table 3 with majority (85.7%) being aware of their library's features; indicating widespread awareness of their school libraries' features. Based on the extent of school library experience, data collected reveals that 67.8% visitation while 32.2% others, who did not visit their school libraries had no response for frequency of visit.

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents based on School Library Experience(N=391)

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	Locate/access school library conveniently	116 (29.7)	143 (36.6)	4 (1.0)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)
2.	School library environment is conducive for use	83 (21.2)	152 (38.9)	19 (4.9)	9 (2.3)	2 (0.5)
3.	Access to resources availability in school library	68 (17.4)	145 (37.1)	33 (8.4)	18 (4.6)	1 (0.3)
4.	Access to school library services	58 (14.8)	160 (40.9)	28 (7.2)	17 (4.3)	2 (0.5)
5.	Access to school library facilities	53 (13.6)	149 (38.1)	38 (9.7)	21 (5.4)	4 (1.0)
6.	School library's resources relevance to information needs	72 (18.4)	136 (34.8)	43 (11.0)	12 (3.1)	2 (0.5)

Awareness and Experience of School Library as Determinants of Library Usage among University of Lagos Undergraduates

Ojuolape Olubukunola OGUNBAWO, Abdulwahab Olanrewaju SSA
Evelyn Olakitan AKINBORO and ⁴Ahmed Usman ABDULSALAM

7.	Resources are up-to-date for information needs	39 (10.0)	114 (29.2)	68 (17.4)	31 (7.9)	13 (3.3)
8.	Access to assistance from school librarian	35 (9.0)	117 (29.9)	50 (12.8)	42 (10.7)	21 (5.4)
9.	Library arrangement is simple to understand	62 (15.9)	155 (39.6)	36 (9.2)	12 (3.1)	0 (0.0)
10.	Library's layout is simple	51 (13.0)	165 (42.2)	32 (8.2)	13 (3.3)	4 (1.0)

Source: Field Survey

Note: SA+A=Agree; D+SD=Disagree

Table 4 shows the responses regarding the respondents' school library experiences ranging from ease of locating and accessing their school libraries (66.30%), conducive school library environment (60.1%), ease of accessing available resources(54.5%),among others.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents' Reasons for using the University Library(N=391)

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	Locate and access university library conveniently	133 (34.0)	165 (42.2)	13 (3.3)	6 (1.5)	0 (0.0)
2.	Conducive environment	90 (23.0)	198 (50.6)	26 (6.6)	2 (0.5)	1 (0.3)
3.	Access to availability resources in the university library	84 (21.5)	168 (43.0)	54 (13.8)	8 (2.0)	3 (0.8)
4.	Access to university library services	81 (20.7)	178 (45.5)	45 (11.5)	11 (2.8)	2 (0.5)
5.	Access to university library facilities	83 (21.2)	158 (40.4)	59 (15.1)	14 (3.6)	3 (0.8)
6.	University library's resources relevance to information needs	77 (19.7)	166 (42.5)	55 (14.1)	18 (4.6)	1 (0.3)
7.	Resources are up to date for information needs	55 (14.1)	164 (41.9)	78 (19.9)	18 (4.6)	2 (0.5)
8.	Access to the assistance of university librarian	50 (12.8)	139 (35.5)	78 (19.9)	34 (8.7)	16 (4.1)
9.	University library arrangement is simple to understand	90 (23.0)	186 (47.6)	30 (7.7)	5 (1.3)	6 (1.5)
10.	University library's layout is simple	73 (18.7)	187 (47.8)	43 (11.0)	11 (2.8)	3 (0.8)

Source: Field Survey

Note: SA+A=Agree; D+SD=Disagree

Table 5 shows the reasons that respondents use their university libraries include ease in locating and accessing these libraries(76.2%), conducive environment (73.6%),ease of access to available resources (64.5%); ability to use available services efficiently (66.2%), access to facilities (61.6%) relevance of the resources to their information needs (62.2%); up to date resources and services (56.00%); among others.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between school library awareness and library usage among University of Lagos undergraduate students.

Table 6: PPMC on Relationship between School Library Awareness and University Library Usage

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	N	Df	R-cal	P	Remark
School library awareness	27.47	5.311	391	389	.260	.000**	Sig...
University library Usage	32.35	16.328					

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on the first hypotheses, Table 6 shows the results of the relationship between school library awareness and the use of university library by the respondents, indicating that R-cal= .260; Df = 389 and P = 0.000, which is less than the level of significant set at 0.05. This implies that there is a significant relationship between school library awareness and the university library usage of the respondents.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between school library experience and library usage among University of Lagos undergraduates.

Table 7: PPMCon Relationship between School Library Experience and University Library Usage

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	N	Df	R-cal	P	Remark
School library experience	26.56	18.771	391	389	.340	.000**	Sig...
University library usage	32.56	16.35					

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 7 shows the PPMC results on the relationship between school library experience and the usage of university library. The result indicates that R-cal= .340; Df = 389 and P = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance set at 0.05. This

implies that there is a significant relationship between school library awareness and the university library usage by the respondents.

Discussion of the Findings

The results of the findings show that majority of the respondents had libraries in their primary and secondary schools and are aware of the features of their school libraries. This indicates that there are school libraries in most schools and majority of the students are aware of both the presence of the school library and its features. This agrees with the findings of Moruf (2015) that there are functional libraries in some schools in Oyo State, Nigeria, especially private schools, while there are libraries in most public schools though non-functional. Similarly, Arua and Chinaka (2011) have also found that there is an awareness that libraries do exist in the schools studied.

On the extent of school library experience, majority of the students visit their school libraries regularly; somewhat similar to the findings of Arua and Chinaka (2011), in which a greater majority of their respondents are also found to have used their school libraries occasionally. This also agrees with Iyoro (2004), who stresses that the availability of resources encouraged the use of library services. The findings indicate that where school libraries exist, majority of the respondents do not visit the library, let alone find them easy to use, except with the help of school library orientation programmes and friends; in line with the findings of Arua and Chinaka (2011) as well as that of Cribb and Holt (2012).

Based on university library usage among the students studied, findings reveal that majority of the students use the university library, mostly on weekly basis and they find them easy to use; for assignments and for study. This agrees with the findings of Kaushamalika, Arachchige, and Weerakoon (2018), in their study which show that students will use resources that are easy to find, available and easy to understand.

Most of the undergraduate students studied know how to use the university library on their own, indicating that they lack previous library experience. This is a reflection of the finding of Jato, Ogunniyi and Olubiyo (2014) where students are found to not regularly use the school libraries, with many other students, responding that they have never used the libraries. This implies that more efforts need to be made to improve the awareness, frequency and regularity of library use. Cameron (2004) and Kaushamalika, Arachchige, and Weerakoon (2018) also found out that students will initially use only resources that they are familiar with.

This agrees with the rejected null hypothesis, as the previous school library awareness was a determinant of their university library use. This could translate to an increase university library use among undergraduates, as several explanations for

non-academic library use as identified by Peris and Japhet (2016) can be reduced via prior awareness, experience and use of standard school libraries. Chimah, Nwajei, and Akom (2015) have found that at least 75% of the undergraduate students become anxious during their initial library research experiences, describing their initial interaction with the library in terms of fear and anxiety, confusion, overwhelmed by a feeling of being lost, scared, overpowered and helpless. This is due to lack of prior library experience. Thus, the results, particularly from the hypotheses tested, indicate that there is a significant relationship between school library awareness and university library usage of the undergraduate students at the University of Lagos.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Early exposure to, and awareness of, library experiences are established by this study as determinants of library usage among University of Lagos students. Therefore, the study recommends that:

- i. Primary and secondary school students should be exposed to the presence of libraries in their schools by establishing standard libraries in these schools, as required by the National Policy on Education.
- ii. Library orientation programmes should be held in primary and secondary schools on a regular basis and students should be encouraged to use the library, its facilities, resources and services so as to be familiar with them with the library and build up their library experience before their undergraduate years.
- iii. Library Studies hour should be introduced in the school curriculum from primary school to enable pupils early contact with the idea of the library.
- iv. Minimum standards for school libraries by the Nigerian School Library Association should be enforced and maintained in all school libraries in Nigeria by the association and other school regulatory bodies.

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