

# Gender Differentials in Library Use Pattern Among Students of Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa

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## Abstract

*This study investigated gender differentials in library use pattern among polytechnic students from The Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa. Through a purposive sampling procedure, 300 students (male =150, female=150) were sampled for the study. Data was collected through the use of the questionnaire analysed using simple percentages. The result of this study revealed a general decline in-library use of both male and female respondents. However, the result suggests that male polytechnic students use the library more than their male counterparts. The result of this study also showed that most of the respondents reported that they use the library for assignments. More female students visit the library for assignments than male and more male students visit the library for examinations//test preparation. Finally, the result showed that most of the polytechnic students reported that they prefer electronic resources to printed resources. Concerning gender, more male prefer printed materials than female students. The researcher recommended, among others, that Polytechnic lecturers should always give their students assignments as this will lead to a corresponding increase in the frequency of library use.*

**Keywords:** Gender, Library, Pattern, Polytechnic Use

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## Introduction

A library is an essential place in any academic institution. As the centre and source of learning resources, the library hosts resources that are useful to both students and learners. The library plays a fundamental role in aiding academic institutions to achieve their goals of knowledge production. Majid and Abdoulaye (2000) averred that academic institutions play a central role in society by preparing future generations to use the acquired knowledge to meet their responsibilities more efficiently. The libraries of such institutions serve a variety of users such as students, faculty, administrators and staff with diverse information needs. These libraries collect a variety of information sources and offer various services for supporting instructional, research and learning activities. Hence, the importance of libraries in academic institutions is considerable, and they are often viewed as a nucleus of academic activity (Majid, & Abdoulaye, 2000).

The library of contemporary society is a powerhouse where information is stored, generated and transferred to fulfil the users' need. For the optimum use of the library, its users should also know to access its resources to their full benefit making every search effective

(Shrestha, 2008). Academic library, according to Mason (2010), has the mandate of building and maintaining a collection that will support and enhance the instructional needs of the institution. Mason adds that academic library provides access to all sources of information. Abosede and Ibikunle (2011) averred that the services of the library depend on processed data from users to understand their information need and make corrections on past mistakes and improve on the future. The researchers add that this can be achieved by library users; who determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the services provided by the academic library. The submission of Abosede and Ibikunle (2011) positioned library users as the main drivers of library activities. Unarguably, the library users are to the library, what the consumer is to the producer. This means that the library use pattern of users, especially students, is essential.

Understanding the library use pattern of polytechnic students is essential because it will provide useful data on how to render library services as well as counsel students on library use. This is more so that fulfilling user needs is an essential aspect of library management. As such, constant assessment of user needs against existing services and the library collection is a necessary management technique for the continuous upgrading of the services provided by the library of any kind (Perera, 2005). Library use pattern can be examined based on gender, considering that gender has been identified as playing a significant role in people's behaviour. Gender describes those socially constructed and marked differences that exist between males and females in any society. These differences do not only guide the way individuals view themselves; they influence specific roles and expectations between males and females in various conditions. Casimir, Chukwuelobe, and Ugwu (2014) defined gender as socio-cultural, political, economic constructs made by a society that define the roles, responsibilities and general societal expectations for both men and women. The gender of people is likely to influence library use pattern of students in the area of the frequency of visit, the purpose of the visit, among others. It is based on this that study investigated the library use pattern of students of Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa along gender line.

### **Problem Statement**

Although many studies (Funmilayo, 2013; Igun, 2010; Teoh, & Tan, 2011) have investigated library use pattern among library patrons, literature focusing on library use pattern of polytechnic students within the prism of gender is still emerging. Considering the revolution in technology which has led to the emergence of social media as well as the pervasiveness of the information and communication technologies, it is gradually becoming challenging to predict the library use pattern of students. This is because, with the revolution in technology, library users with Internet access can connect with library repositories in different parts of the world. These changes have created an atmosphere of uncertainty regarding how often students visit the library, the purpose of their visit and their usage pattern. Considering the influence of gender on behaviour, library use pattern has also not been sufficiently investigated hence the need for this study.

### **Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to determine the library use pattern of The Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa students based on gender. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain:

1. The frequency of library use between male and female polytechnic students.
2. The purpose of using library between male and female polytechnic students.
3. The preference of library resources between male and female polytechnic students.

## **Literature Review**

The general objective of learning is internalised ideas, knowledge and skills. The hallmark of learning is when learners have understood what is meant to be learnt. One of the ways of assessing learning is through its outcome, and library use is part of the learning process. Oakleaf (2011) avers that the library occupies a strategic place in the learning process. Oakleaf adds that the library offers skills that employers need such as critical thinking and analytical thinking skills (81% of employers); ability to analyse and solve complex problems (75%); and ability to locate, organise, and evaluate information from multiple sources (68%).

Library use among students has often attracted the attention of scholars, perhaps because of the central role that the use of library plays in the academic outcome of students. Vishala and Bhandi, (2009) posit that library has a prominent role to play in supporting higher education to fulfil objectives of its parent institution because classroom instructions alone will not provide all the opportunities needed for attaining all the complex educational objectives. This means library use has a significant role to play in the academic outcome.

There is evidence in the literature suggesting that library use has a corresponding influence on academic achievements. Whitmire (2002) investigated the relation between library resources and services and students' educational outcomes through multiple regression analysis utilising the data collected by the College Student Experience Questionnaire and the National Center for Education Statistics. Three sets of independent variables were defined as 1) background characteristic variables, (gender; race; age), 2) college experience variables (grade-point averages; class year; enrollment status; student-faculty interactions; engagement writing activities; active learning activities; the number of term papers written; hours spent studying per week), and 3) academic library variables (resources; services). The dependent variables were defined as library use (usage as a place; use of indexes to journal articles; developing a bibliography for term papers; use card catalogue or computer and ask a librarian for help. Others are reading in the reserve or reference section; check out books; checked citations in material read; reading a primary reference; found materials in browsing stacks). Others depended variables are self-reported gains in critical thinking skills (ability to think analytically and logically; ability to put ideas together, and see relationships. Others are similarities and differences between ideas; ability to learn on your own, pursue ideas, and find the information you need). The analyses showed, however, that library resources and services had almost no influence over undergraduates' use of the library or their self-reported gains in critical thinking skills. Although this was a study that hinted at a way to measure the contribution of academic libraries to undergraduates' educational outcomes, it fell short of proving a positive relationship. In order to investigate this connection further, Toda and Nagata (2007) conducted a mailed to the

former students of Bunkyo University Koshigaya campus (no. of respondents: 340; return rate: 33.7%), focusing on the relations between their library usage and learning outcomes while they were students. The analyses indicated a positive relationship between library use and academic performance. Allison (2015) investigated the impact of libraries on undergraduates using two-year duration than analysed library use as demonstrated through checkouts and off-campus access to full-text resources against grade point averages (GPAs) of undergraduates and graduates at an extensive Midwestern library. The study found that undergraduates with a GPA above the mean university GPA used the library more than those with a GPA below the mean. There was a correlation between more generous use of the library and increases in GPA between the two years—that is, as one grew, so did the other. The study also showed that students who checked out materials in one year returned for more checkouts. This study provides evidence on the role of libraries in learning outcome.

### **Gender and Library Use Pattern**

Gender has been thought to play a critical role in human behaviour. It is argued that gender influences academic-related activities like learning pattern. Utulu (2006) opines gender influences factors such as income, time, constraints, literacy, education, language and cultural context that affect access to facilities, training and employment in information technology. Igun (2010) reported that there is no significant difference in the challenge encountered by librarians in the south-south zone of Nigeria in the utilisation on of ICT due to gender. Applegate (2008) reported that male library patrons in many respects were simply below-average in many areas (fewer visits, fewer services or resources used) but also showed distinctly different choices in a few areas, mainly related to electronic and business-related items. They also are almost entirely uninterested in children's areas, a sharp contrast with adult female patrons). Funmilayo (2013) reported that gender differences in age, marital status, Internet access, and use of advisory services in the library. According to the result, men within the age of 30-56 years used library resources than women of the same age; a higher percentage of married men used library facilities more than married women. Also, young and mature men utilised Internet facilities, ebooks and reference books more than women. There was no significant difference in the use of textbooks and library loans by both genders. However, most women utilised advisory services compared to men. Fiction and nonfiction magazines such as *Tell* were patronised more by women than men. Teoh and Tan (2011) report that gender does not significantly influence library use. Grimes and Charters (2000) and Whitmire (2001) found that older minority females to be frequent library users compared to their male counterparts; Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (1997) noted the opposite to be true. Also, Wolf (2005) found no statistical difference between gender and library use frequency.

### **Methodology**

This study used a descriptive survey design to achieve its aim. This approach is most appropriate when the objective of a study is to describe, explain or explore a phenomenon. According to Nworgu (2006), "These are the studies which aim at collecting data on and describing systematically, the characteristics, features or facts about a population." A descriptive

survey was used for the study because it best helped the researcher investigate the gender differentials in library use pattern of polytechnic students. Purposive sampling technique was adapted to select 150 male and 150 female students from the Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa for the study. The choice of purposive sampling was to ensure that there was a balance in the gender representation of the sample. The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire developed by the researcher.

Reliability of the instrument was determined through the use of a test-retest approach. A pre-test questionnaire of 20 copies was designed and administered to respondents in the study area. After two weeks interval, the same pre-test copies of questionnaire were administered again to the same respondents. With the aid of SPSS version 16.0, the correlation coefficient was determined, and this yielded 0.84 reliability which was considered high. In the analysis of data for the study, data for the study, simple percentages were used while data was presented in tables.

## Results and Discussion

Out of the 300 copies of the questionnaire that were administered to the respondents, 287 (144 male and 143 female) representing 96% were returned. The result of the study is presented in the following tables:

**Table 1: Frequency of Library Usage Based on Gender**

| Gender | Once a week | Twice a week | Daily       | Every week  | Weekly | Once a week |
|--------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------|-------------|
| Male   | 0 (0)       | 0 (0)        | 27.5% (79)  | 22.6% (65)  | 0 (0)  | 0 (0)       |
| Female | 0 (0)       | 0 (0)        | 30.0% (86)  | 19.9% (57)  | 0 (0)  | 0 (0)       |
| Total  | 0 (0)       | 0 (0)        | 57.5% (165) | 42.5% (122) | 0 (0)  | 0 (0)       |

The result from the table above suggests a general decline in-library use of both male and female respondents. However, the result suggests that male polytechnic students use the library more than their male counterparts. However, the result suggested that male polytechnic students use the library more than their male counterparts. The result of this study is consistent with that of Utulu (2006) who reported gender difference in the user library facilities. The result of the current study is contrary to that of Applegate (2008), who reported that male library patrons use the library less frequent than their female counterparts. Teoh and Tan (2011) found no significant difference in-library use based on gender.

The following table was computed to determine the purpose of library use between male and female polytechnic students in.

**Table 2: Purpose of Using Library between Male and Female Students**

| Gender       |            | Frequency        |                          |                   |                            |        |
|--------------|------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------|
|              |            | Do<br>assignment | Prepare for<br>exam/test | Gain<br>knowledge | Teach<br>other<br>students | Total  |
| Male         | Count      | 88               | 37                       | 9                 | 10                         | 144    |
|              | % of Total | 30.7%            | 12.9%                    | 3.1%              | 3.5%                       | 50.2%  |
| Female       | Count      | 101              | 23                       | 9                 | 10                         | 143    |
|              | % of Total | 35.2%            | 8.0%                     | 3.1%              | 3.5%                       | 49.8%  |
| <b>Total</b> | Count      | 189              | 60                       | 18                | 20                         | 287    |
|              | % of Total | 65.9%            | 20.9%                    | 6.3%              | 7.0%                       | 100.0% |

Table 2 revealed showed that most of the respondents reported that they use the library for assignments. More female students visit the library for assignments than male and more male students visit the library for examinations//test preparation. Overall, only a few of the students visit the library to gain knowledge. This result is consistent with that of Funmilayo (2013) who found that gender significantly influences the material use of library patrons. What this means is that when lecturers give students to take home assignment, it is likely to spur them to visit the library. This result has implications on the overall academic performance of polytechnic students because previous studies (e.g., Allison, 2015; Toda & Nagata, 2007; Whitmire, 2002) showed that library use correlates academic achievement. The simple implication here is that the more lecturers give assignments to students, the more they visit the library, and the better they perform academically.

The following table was computed to examine students' preferences of library resources.

**Table 3: Students' Preferences for Library Resources**

| Gender       |            | Library resources |            |        |
|--------------|------------|-------------------|------------|--------|
|              |            | Printed           | Electronic | Total  |
| Male         | Count      | 44                | 100        | 144    |
|              | % of Total | 15.3%             | 34.8%      | 50.2%  |
| Female       | Count      | 22                | 121        | 143    |
|              | % of Total | 7.7%              | 42.2%      | 49.8%  |
| <b>Total</b> | Count      | 66                | 221        | 287    |
|              | % of Total | 23.0%             | 77.0%      | 100.0% |

The result from table 3 showed that most of the polytechnic students reported that they prefer electronic resources to printed resources. Concerning gender, more male prefer printed materials than female students. The result of this study is not surprising because information and communication technologies have become so pervasive that people now prefer for an electronic version to printed materials. The result of this study is consistent with Auman (2002), who studied high school students and their preferences to read from the screen or paper and what makes their decisions. Auman also had an experimental part of the study to investigate if there is a difference in the comprehension of the students. Although students prefer reading from a screen, the comprehension score of the paper group is higher than the screening group. The result of this study is contrary to that of Spencer (2006) who studied the preferences of university students for their reading online course-related materials and reported that many learners prefer the paper version of course materials. Moreover, even those who prefer reading from screen indicated their desire to have the option for printed version due to its portability, reliability, annotation, highlighting and ergonomic features. Based on these results, the researcher argues that gender plays an essential role in determining the use of library among students in polytechnics.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the result of this study, the researcher concludes that there is a general decline in library patronage among polytechnic students. This has a negative implication on the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is because no sustainable development can be achieved without knowledge and skill acquisitions. Specifically, goal five seeks to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This can hardly be achieved without reading materials. Also, this paper concludes that more male students visit the library than their female counterparts. This finding has implications on gender equality attainment as canvassed by Sustainable Development Goals. This is because knowledge is power, and when people read; they are likely to more knowledgeable and occupy decision positions in society. Also, it is the conclusion of this paper that that most students visit the library to do assignments and that electronic materials are preferred to printed ones.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the result of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Polytechnic lecturers should always give their students assignments as this will lead to a corresponding increase infrequent use of library resources.
2. School managements should make provision for functional electronic libraries as most students prefer e-materials.
3. Female Students of polytechnic should improve in their use of library resources, as this is the only way they can compete favourably with their male counterpart.

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