RESEARCH PAPER

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LIBRARY LITERACY AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS IN COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, AMBROSE ALLI UNIVERSITY EKPOMA

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ABSTRACT

In academics, economics, politics, as well as religious circles, gender gaps and differences have been a topic of discussion. In this regards, this study was undertaken to determine if there are gender differences in the library literacy of medical students of the College of Medicine (CoM), Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, Edo State. This was evaluated by assessing the differences in library access, frequencies in library utilization, reasons for utilization and problems faced when using the library. The study was a descriptive cross sectional survey involving the use of a self-structured/pretested questionnaire. 200 students of CoM, AAU, were randomly sampled for the purpose of data collection and analysis. The result showed that the accessibility of library for the male students was lower than the 78% recorded for females. However, majority (67%) of all the students reported irregular usage of the library. Overall, the reasons for visiting the library were mainly to read their notes (121), do assignment (149), and borrow books (111) and prepare for exams during examinations (137).Conclusively, the findings of this study has shown that gender differences exist in library utilization among medical students of CoM, AAU, Ekpoma, Edo State.

Keywords: Gender difference, Library literacy, Undergraduates, Medical student.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries have always seen literacy for all as a major objective so as to direct educational resources, human and material toward helping every person learn how to speak, read, write, and compute, and to develop a community-wide literacy system (Lyman, 1977). Anuobi (2004) pointed out that man has scientifically placed himself in an environment that is global and digital, which predisposes him to constant use and search of information. Shanahan (2006) believes that the health care industry is in a state of constant and rapid change and due to the increase in scientific knowledge and rapid technological advances, there has been a growing emphasis on the physicians need to efficiently access, retrieve, and use scientific evidences to improve patient care (Li et al., 2009).

Gender differences are being discussed in academia, economy, politics, science and technology and even in religious circles. According to McGinty and Moore (2008), gender issues have been in the forefront of impassioned public discussion regarding higher education. Waldman (2003) had acknowledged also that gender is a relevant factor in the use of electronic databases, while issues of gender difference among students towards the use of library resources have been raised by scholars. In a report by Manda and Mulkangara (2007), gender was observed to be associated with the use of electronic information resources, and that male postgraduate students were more likely to use e-resources than female students. They further reported that even when there was control for attitude towards the use of e-resources or training in the use of e-resources the relationship between gender and e-resources was maintained. In fact, a study by Amkpa (2007) revealed that male and female students differ significantly in attitudes towards computer applications which later affects their job opportunities after graduation.

Furthermore, Utulu (2006) had observed that the issue of gender gap in the digital divide and the impact of new technologies on gender in particular, and on the economic and political spheres of women lives. These are very important as gender influences factors like income, time constraints, literacy, education, language, and culture (Hafkin and Taggart, 2001; Huyer and Mitter, 2002; Paul, 2009), and in turn affects access to facilities, training, and employment in information Technology.

However, Luan et al. (2005) observed that there is a gender gap in the use of internet communication technology. They found out that females are normally less confident than males in handling technology such as computer software. The research conducted by Madigan et al. (2007) to compare students' skills in four major technology domain areas indicated that first year female students showed less confidence in using computer technology and did not perceive themselves as competent technology users. Also a study by Sacks et al. (1994) of higher school students found that their attitudes to computer and use tended to vary by gender.

Indeed, effective information use by undergraduates in an academic environment could be a result of the student's acquisition of the requisite social, emotional, cognitive skills and behavior for successful social adaptation. Gender dimensions of these variables could be crucial to providing explanation on how female undergraduate had fared against her male counterparts in terms of social competence and information utilization? The purpose of this study therefore, was to determine if there is a gender difference in the library literacy of medical students in College of Medicine, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State by evaluating the library accessibility pattern as well as the frequencies in library utilization, reasons for utilization and problems faced when using the library.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study design: This study adopted the descriptive cross sectional survey method.

Study Area: Ekpoma, the study area is Ekpoma, the administrative headquarters of Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. It lies between latitudes 60 43′ and 60 45′ North of the Equator and longitudes 60 6′ and 608′ East of the Greenwich Meridian (Aziegbe, 2006).

Study population: The study was conducted at the Faculty of Basic Medical Science, College of Medicine, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria. The undergraduate students of the Departments of Medicine and Surgery, Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, and Physiology, formed the study population.

Ethical Consideration: Informed consent was sort for and was granted by all the students involved in the study. They quite understood the bases for the study following detailed explanations and a series of lectures on the subject.

Exclusion Criteria: Students, who choose not to participate or have injured palms, were excluded.

Data collection: Data were collected using a well designed/pre-tested questionnaire.

Data Analysis: The data was analyzed, using SPSS software package version 17.0. The Mean ± standard deviation values were calculated. The Students t-test method was employed for comparison, while p-value ≤ 0.05 was considered statistically significant at 95% confidence level.

Statistical Analysis: All values were expressed in mean ± SEM. Data were statistically analyzed using Student's t-test. A P-value of 0.05 was considered to be significant.

RESULTS

Accessibility of library was done using identity card and this is shown in table 1. Overall, 66% of the male students were having an identity card compared to 78% of female students who have an identity card.

The majority (67%) of the respondents used the library irregularly (38% male and 29% female); followed by students who used the library once a week (66%; 29% male and 37% female) and then those who uses it twice a week (27%; 13% male and 14% female).

On the reasons for visiting the library, table 3 shows that 121 respondents visited the library to read their notes; 149 only visited to do assignment; 67 to read textbook, 27 to read newspapers and magazine; and 111 borrow library books. Similarly, 41 respondents visited the library to improve on general knowledge while 57 and 137 of the respondents visited the library for research purposes and for preparation of examinations only, respectively.

Table 1. Accessibility of library

Frequency of use	Male	Female	% difference	P value
Students with an identity card	66	78		
Student without identity card	34	22	12%	p>0.05
Total	100	100		

Table 2. Frequencies of use of the library

Frequency of use	Frequency	Male	Female	% difference	P value
Daily	20	09	11	2%	p>0.05
Once in a week	66	29	37	8%	p>0.05
Twice a week	27	13	14	1%	p>0.05
3 - 4 times a week	20	09	11	2%	p>0.05
Irregular	67	38	29	9%	p>0.05
Total	200	100	100		

Table 3. Reasons for visiting the library

Frequency of use	Frequency	Male	Female	% difference	P value
To read note	121	52	69	17%	p>0.05
To do assignment	149	61	88	27%	p<0.05
To read textbook	67	26	41	15%	p<0.05
To read newspapers and magazines	27	24	03	21%	p<0.05
To borrow library books	111	53	58	5%	p>0.05
To improve general knowledge	41	14	27	13%	p>0.05
To prepare for exams	137	61	76	15%	p>0.05
For research	56	35	21	14%	p>0.05

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate possible variations in gender utilization of the library as female students are more likely to go for a library ID card and subsequently utilize library services. This agrees with the study by Onovughe and Ogbah (2013) who evaluated students of Colleges of Education in Delta State, Nigeria (Warri, Agbor and Mosogar). This observation contradicts the studies where male students were reported to utilize the library more than their female counterparts (Applegate, 2008; Daramola, 2013). The assertion by Manda and Mulkangara (2007) that male postgraduate students were more likely to use e-resources than female students, may explain the observed gender differences. Moreover, Amkpa (2007) and Sacks et al. (1994) have observed that male and female students differ significantly in attitudes towards computer applications.

Although boys and girls are generally educated side-by-side in schools and institution, their experiences however, are profoundly different. The reason for library use by female study may either be that the female students are more confident in the use of the library than their male counterparts who are more confident in the use of computer software applications as reported by Luan et al. (2005) or the fact that female students perceive themselves as incompetent technology users (Madigan et al., 2007).

Although many interests are common between gender as seen in this study (table 2 and 3), a large-scale gender analysis of reading preferences showed that males selected reading newspapers and magazines and research as reasons to use the library as against reading notes/textbooks, doing assignments, borrowing library books and

preparing for exams. This have been similarly reported by Hall and Coles (1999) and Sturm (2003) who stated that males exhibited profound preferences for graphic media such as comics, computers, and newspapers, as well as interest in horses, mystery fiction, romance fiction, and fine arts/crafts. Though girls read more than boys, they choose narrative fiction to the neglect of other genres (Burdick, 1996). According to Burdick (1996), girls on the other hand, are relatively more excited than boys in embarking on any project but they lack the confidence to carry it to a successful end.

Conclusively, gender difference does exist in the utilization of the library as exemplified by the findings of this study. It is recommended however, that students be oriented on the balanced use of the physical library as well as the e-resources available.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Momodu, O.M. conceptualized and prepared the manuscript for publication.