



Research article

Reading Habits of Undergraduates for Knowledge Development in Western Delta University, Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT



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This study investigated the reading habits of undergraduates for knowledge development in WDU. Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria. The study's particular goals are to determine the kinds of things WDU students read, why they read what they do, how much time they spend reading each day, how many books they read each week, and what obstacles they face in their reading. A descriptive survey method was used for this inquiry. According to the study's findings, the undergraduates read newspapers and text books the most frequently. A sizable portion of them said they read for exams and assignments. The drop in their reading habits was brought on by a lack of time, a lack of interest, and the emergence of social media. The study recommended that the Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure that the Use of Library Skills should be re-introduced in the newly developed CCMAS curriculum of the general studies and should be taught as a first-year course in all Nigerian Universities. This will help boost their reading and knowledge development. The findings of this study may be used by university authorities, students and librarians to develop policies that will help improve the reading habits among WDU students within and outside the library. Other studies have dealt with reading habits. Little or no study has been conducted on reading habits of undergraduates for knowledge development in Western Delta University, Oghara Delta State, Nigeria. This paper is the outcome of unique research that has not been submitted elsewhere for publication.

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Introduction

Reading is a means to learning new things. It is a crucial ability that undergraduates need to develop in order to pursue their academic goals. Reading, listening, speaking, and writing are all language abilities that must be mastered for any endeavour in life to be successful. The reading ability is the most important language skill for comprehension (Olubunmi, 2018).

Reading is not just an important life skill; it is also an activity-oriented ability that requires coordination of many different organ systems, including the brain, before understanding can take place. When something is done repeatedly, it develops into a habit (Bharuthram, 2017).

The practice of reading encourages the advancement of one's own personal growth as well as societal progress in general. This habit is often evaluated in connection to the volume of reading, reading frequency, and average reading duration (Wagner, 2002).

Because it enables undergraduates to absorb information analytically, critically, and reflectively, good reading habits aid comprehension and reasoning. However, Wulandari, Astuti, and Furaidah (2021) found that the method for fostering a love of

reading, especially at academic institutions, has not yielded the best results.

According to Noor (2011), reading is regarded as the most important academic language ability for all second- and foreign-language learners in all higher educational institutions.

In most higher education institutions, reading habits among undergraduates are sadly found to be declining on a daily basis. Students seldom read, and those who do tend to read primarily to pass exams (Paul et al., 2012).

Mbhele (2020) argues that since reading proficiency is a key component of academic achievement, undergraduate students in higher education institutions at all levels should practice good reading habits.

According to Bharuthram (2017), reading a variety of texts would improve students' text comprehension abilities since they will start to learn technical terminology and grow more used to various text forms and textual features. They must develop the habit of reading the suggested or required materials, however, in order to get these advantages. A strong reading habit is a crucial component of steady, long-term intellectual development and is

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crucial for enhancing academic achievement. The volume of reading material a person chooses to read and the fervor with which they continue to read are further indicators of that person's interests (Toker & Aminou, 2019). Thus, this study seeks to investigate the reading habits of undergraduates for knowledge development in WDU, Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

It is commonly believed that students reading habits have declined globally compared to earlier times. All of an institution's courses revolve on reading. According to research by Quadri and Abomoge (2013), the majority of respondents read newspapers, with 60 (30.3%) of them doing so, while 38 (19.2%) read novels for academic and research reasons and utilized the Internet to help them study for tests. Additionally, it was discovered that some of the issues impeding successful reading were a lack of information knowledge, poor lighting, seating arrangements, and insufficient information resources.

Despite the assertions of a number of authors that Arab students typically have negative attitudes toward reading and those reading cultures are rare in the majority of the Arab world, Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2018) suggested that roughly half of participants read occasionally and the majority of respondents list reading as one of their hobbies. Additionally, the majority of respondents seemed to be aware of a variety of reading techniques that may improve their vocabulary, core language, and reading abilities in order to raise their reading levels.

According to the research by Wulandari, Astuti, and Furaidah (2021), ELE students have decent reading habits, but they might still do more, particularly in terms of how often and how many English novels they read.

According to studies by Akarsu and Daryemez (2014), Atatürk University students majoring in English Language and Literature often read novels, textbooks, and internet content. The bulk of them claimed to read publications seldom.

Nearly all of the respondents in the research by Fatiloro, Adesola, and Alaba (2017) acknowledged the value of reading. On average, 65.5% of people like reading about their different areas of expertise every day, whereas 25.0% enjoy doing so once a week. The research also showed that reading regularly improves academic achievement.

According to the study by Nazhari, Delfi, and Syafri (2022), only a small percentage of students in the English study program at Riau University have a habit of reading in English, and less than 25% of students read English-language materials on a regular basis. In a related survey, Yilmaz (2000) found that the majority of respondents had no reading habits, with the least number of avid readers (8.5%).

According to research by Fatiloro, Adesola, and Alaba (2017), Oyo college students' reading habits are encouraging. However, in order to increase their vocabulary, students should read more books and articles. They were also urged to utilize the library as their first stop for up-to-date and relevant information sources.

The results of Mbhele (2020) indicated that while students loved reading, they only read sporadically or once per week, suggesting that they do not have a regular reading routine. The survey found that books (inspirational, religious, and fiction), the internet (social media and websites), magazines, and newspapers were the most popular reading sources among students. Academic books weren't as well-liked. Many students were extrinsically

driven to read primarily in order to succeed in tests and exams and to improve their English language skills.

Iftanti (2012) came to the conclusion that EFL students did not exhibit strong English reading habits. According to their enthusiasm to consistently spend time reading a variety of English texts and their great motivation to read English for enjoyment, only a small number of individuals are thought to have excellent English reading habits.

According to Anugrah (2019), 57% of students at Indonesia's Islamic university read for one to two hours every day. Students who read for three to four hours every day came in second (11%). This suggests that undergraduate students' reading motivation is still low. 35% of respondents read online publications like journals and e-books.

According to Lanying's research (2005), FCSHD students read between 5 and 10 hours per week and between 1 and 4 hours per day. It was also discovered that among the students, newspapers and magazines were the two most prevalent and well-liked resources. The results also showed that reading for homework and tests is the most significant factor influencing pupils' reading habits. The loss of time due to studying, on the other hand, is shown to be the most significant factor discouraging pupils from reading.

According to studies by Ivwighreghweta and Ekhorutomwen (2022), Delta State undergraduates have poor reading habits. Distractions from social media and the internet, a lack of interest in reading, social distractions, and a lack of book availability were the causes of this decline. As a result, this research looked at the reading habits of undergraduates for knowledge development at Western Delta University in Nigeria's Oghara Delta State.

According to Ivwighreghweta and Efeverha-Ogodo (2023), MCIU lecturers read and make use of digital resources for the purpose of research and also for preparing lecture notes.

Okolo and Ivwighreghweta (2020) discovered among others, that the undergraduates in MCIU spend majorly two to four hours in reading. Assignments, personal busy schedule, poor lightings, poor library environment, parental social-economic status and inadequate books were the factors that affects the reading habits of the undergraduates.

In order to achieve effectively in their academic pursuits, undergraduates need to develop the habit of reading. One of the key factors determining an undergraduate's academic success or failure is his or her innate ability to read (Toker & Aminou, 2019). However, it has been noted in the majority of the literature, including those by Nazhari, Delfi and Syafri (2022), Mbhele (2020), and Iftanti (2012), that undergraduate reading habits are declining day by day in most higher educational institutions. Students do not read, and those who do, only do so to pass their exams. The researcher's own observations also pointed to the identical circumstance at WDU. This tendency may not be unrelated to students' negative reading attitudes. As a result, this research looked at the reading habits of undergraduates for knowledge development in WDU Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria.

None of the literature reviewed attempted to explain the reading habits of undergraduates for knowledge development in WDU. This is the knowledge gap this study intends to fill.

Research Questions

1. The following research questions were raised to guide this study:
2. What are the types of materials read by WDU undergraduates for knowledge development?

3. What is the purpose of reading by the undergraduates?
4. What is the amount of time spent on reading by the undergraduates in a day?
5. What is the number of books read in a week by the undergraduates?
6. What are the problems hindering reading by the undergraduates?

Method

For this inquiry, the research design adopted for this research is a survey design type of descriptive research. The study's sample included 285 first-year WDU freshmen. Students from the colleges of law, computing, applied health sciences, social and management sciences, and natural and applied health sciences make up this group. The research technique used for this study was a self-created questionnaire called "Reading Habits of Undergraduates (RHUQ)". The entire enumerative and accidental sampling approach was employed for the inquiry. Of the total of two hundred and eighty-five (285) questionnaires distributed, 260 were collected. The researcher and two research assistants administered the questionnaire on the respondents. Frequency and percentage statistics were used to analyze the data.

Findings

The following tables with explanations describe the study's results. Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their college

Colleges	Frequency (Σ)	Percentage (%)
Law	57	21
Computing	25	10
Applied Health Sciences	110	42
Social and Management Sciences	58	22
Natural and Applied Health Sciences	10	5

The bulk of the 110 responses (42%) are from the College of Applied Health Sciences, according to Table 1. The College of Law came in second with 58 (22%).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their sex

Sex	Frequency (Σ)	Percentage (%)
Male	111	43
Female	149	57

The bulk of the 149 responders (57%) are female, according to table 2.

Research Question 1: What are the types of materials read by WDU undergraduates for knowledge development?

Table 3: Types of materials read

Items	SA		A		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Text book/ e-books	121	47	90	35	40	15	9	3
Novel/drama	71	27	134	52	5	2	50	19
Newspaper	101	39	31	12	100	38	8	3
Non-fiction	42	16	-	-	201	77	17	7
Journal	98	38	28	11	109	42	25	9
Online database	87	33	42	16	40	15	91	36
e-mail	99	38	99	38	2	1	60	23

According to Table 3, WDU students read 121 (47%) and 90 (35%) of the text books the most. Following this, 101 (39%) and 31 (12%) students said they regularly read the newspaper.

Research Question 2: What is the purpose of reading by the undergraduates?

Table 4: Purpose of reading

Purpose of reading	Frequency (Σ)	Percentage (%)
Assignments	42	16
Examination	91	35
Personal knowledge	39	15
Obtain better understanding of subject/topic	21	8
To relax	9	3
Personal satisfaction	11	4
Improving English skills	17	8
Improve reading speed	10	4
Learn vocabulary	9	3
Countering boredom	11	4

Table 4 displays the WDU undergraduates' reading objectives. 91 (35% of respondents) said they have read for the test and examination. The next group, 42 (16%), specified assignments. This demonstrates that students mostly read to prepare for exams.

Research Question 3: What is the amount of time spent on reading by the undergraduates in a day?

Table 5: Amount of time spent on reading

Amount of time spent	Frequency (Σ)	Percentage (%)
0-1 hours	172	66
1-2 hours	43	17
2-3 hours	20	8
3-4 hours	21	8
4 hours and above	4	1

According to Table 5, the majority of respondents 172 (66%) spend 0–1 hour a day reading. This was followed by 43 (17%) people who spend between 1-2 hours.

Research Question 4: What is the number of books read in a week by the undergraduates?

Table 6: Number of books read in a week

The Number of Books Read	Frequency (Σ)	Percentage (%)
Five books every week	50	19
Less than five books every week.	210	81
More than five books every week.	-	-

The number of books the students read each week is shown in Table 6. The majority of 210 people (81%) said they read less than five books each week. 50 (19%) people who read five books each week came in second place.

Research Question 5: What are the problems hindering reading by the undergraduates?

Table 7: Problems hindering reading by the undergraduates

Problems	SA		A		D		SD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Lack of time	86	33	100	38	4	2	70	27
insufficient reading materials	42	16	81	31	100	38	37	14
Lack of interest	161	62	-	-	9	3	90	30
Poor attitude of library staff to users	12	5	41	16	200	76	7	3
Inadequate seats	53	20	98	37	9	4	100	38
Advent of social media	120	46	30	12	40	15	70	27

Table 7 the problems hindering reading by the undergraduates. Majority 86 (33%) and 100 (38%) indicated lack of time. Lack of curiosity came next with 160 (62%). Social media's advent had 120 (46%) and 30 (12%) users, respectively. This result is consistent with Lanying's (2005) conclusion that the main reason why students don't read is a lack of time owing to their schoolwork.

Discussion of findings

The study established that WDU students read text books and newspapers. This could be due to the fact that textbooks are important information resources for predicting students' academic progress and knowledge development. This result is consistent with Anugrah's (2019) conclusion that Indonesia's Islamic University students consume online publications including e-books and journals. Similar research by Mbhele (2020) showed that textbooks were the most popular reading resource among students.

The study indicated that WDU undergraduates read for the purpose of examination and specified assignments. This demonstrates that students mostly read to prepare for exams. This could be due to the fact that many of them are now more interested in reading for text and examination purposes than for knowledge development. This result is consistent with Lanying's (2005) research, which showed that reading for assignments and tests had the greatest influence on FCSHD students' reading habits.

A sizeable number of the respondents spend 0-1 hour a day reading. This was followed by people who spend between 1-2 hours. This could be due to the fact that undergraduate reading habits are generally declining. This conclusion contrasts with that of Lanying (2005), who found that FCSHD students read between 5 and 10 hours per week and between 1 and 4 hours per day.

The study showed that majority of the students read less than five books each week. This suggests that, there has been a reduction in students' reading habits and knowledge development. This could be a consequence of social media's effect, which most university students find to be a distraction. This result is consistent with Anugrah (2019), who reported that undergraduates at Indonesia's Islamic universities read for 1 to 2 hours per day on average. Similarly, a study by Nazhari, Delfi, and Syafri (2022) found that Riau University students enrolled in the English study program still have the lowest reading habits in the country.

Majority of the respondents indicated lack of time and social media's advent as problems hindering reading and knowledge

development. This result is consistent with Lanying's (2005) conclusion that the main reason why students don't read is a lack of time owing to their schoolwork.

Recommendations

On the basis of the study's results, the following suggestions were made:

Undergraduates should be encouraged to spend more time to read. This can be achieved by giving them series of assignments and encouraging them to develop their personal reading time tables outside school hours in order to enhance their knowledge development.

The Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure that the Use of Library Skills should be re-introduced in the newly developed CCMAS curriculum of the general studies program. This is to ensure that undergraduates are been exposed in the various information resources in the library and taught how they are being utilized. This will help boost their reading and knowledge development.

Conclusion

This reading habit is often evaluated in connection to the quantity of books read, the frequency of reading, and the amount of time spent reading on average. As a significant portion of WDU students read mostly textbooks for exams, it was determined that their reading habits are not encouraging. However, there is the need for them to read more of novels, drama, non-fiction and journal articles in order to expand their vocabulary and improve their own expertise and knowledge development in order to achieve academic growth on all fronts. The reduction in student reading habits at WDU was brought on by a lack of time and interest in reading as well as knowledge development.

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