

Demographic Variables as Predictors of First Year Undergraduates' Use of the Library in the University of Calabar: Counselling Implications

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Abstract

This study was situated in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. It sought to determine demographic variables as predictors of first year undergraduates' use of the library. The outcome of the study is expected to be invaluable to the guidance counsellors and other stakeholders as it should guide them to predict the first year undergraduates' inclination to library use based on their demographic variables. Such accurate prediction will facilitate the design of appropriate programmes that would aid the first year undergraduates to make the best use of the library and attain academic success. The study was guided by four research questions and three hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance. A researchers' developed instrument tagged Predictors of Usage Questionnaire (PUQ) was used in gathering data. The data generated was analysed using mean, standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA. The results of the study indicated that extent of use of the library by the first year undergraduates is high. The results also indicated age and area of specialization as predictors of first year undergraduates' use of the library; while gender is not a predictor of the first year undergraduates' use of the library. The study therefore outlines the counselling implications of these results and recommends that counsellors should consider these variables while designing interventions to help the students to acquire good reading culture and effective study habits.

Keywords: Demographic variables, predictors, library use, undergraduates, counselling

1. Introduction

The first year of a student in a university is always eventful as it is always characterized by the excitement of gaining admission into the university, the thrill of making new friends, the euphoria of exploring the breathtaking ambience of a university environment, the elation of getting acquainted and adjusted to the social culture of the university, amongst many other pleasurable experiences associated with the university community. Very instructively, these happen, sometimes to the detriment of the academic pursuit of the student. There therefore arises the need to guide the students to balance these social but necessary experiences with the academic engagement of the university system.

It is obvious that some first year undergraduates are ignorant of the impact of their first year academic performance on their overall university performance as measured by their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). Experience has shown that the undergraduates usually realize this relationship between the first year performance and overall performance when it is already late. Counselling orientation service is therefore usually provided to forestall such situation and prepare the students to face their studies with determination from the beginning (Okeke, 2003). The present study is in sync with this objective of preventing the damage from occurring. It sought to establish demographic variables as predictors of first year undergraduates' use of the library, and the implications of such predictors on counselling the students on effective use of the library. This is premised on the fact that the library enhances the academic pursuit of the students, and provides the information sources and resources for the intellectual growth of both the students and the lecturers of a university community (Ofodile and Ifijeh, 2013).

In attending to its mandates, the library has the responsibility of identifying the information needs of its users and ensuring their availability. Such availability, accessibility and use are critical in a university community (Okiki, 2013). However, even where the resources are available and accessible, various factors have been established to be responsible for putting the resources to use. Some of such factors include perceived usefulness of library resources, the convenience of access to the sources, amongst others. Another example of such factors is demographic variables, which is the concern of the present study (Korobili, Tilikidou and Delistavrou, n.d).

Different researchers have studied the influence of demographic variables on dependent variables like productivity, commitment to duty, library use, task performance etc (Anyago and Iyabo, 2014; Animasahun and

Oludemi, 2013; Quadri, 2013). A review of some of such studies is presented here to further establish the justification for the present study. In a study to establish demographical and certain psychological factors as correlates of organizational and career commitment among prison officers in Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria, Animasahun and Oludemi (2013) investigated gender, age, educational qualification, job experience, job satisfaction, motivation etc as correlates of organizational and career commitment. They used a sample of 50 prison officers randomly selected from each of the six states in the Southwest, thus having a total of 300 prison officers as the sample. They reported that gender and educational qualification have negative correlations with organizational commitment; while age, job experience, job satisfaction and motivation were confirmed to be significant correlates of organizational commitment. They also reported that their findings indicated that there was no significant combined effect of the independent variables on organizational commitment.

Another study on demographic variables was conducted to establish if they correlate with lecturers' research productivity in Faculties of Law in Nigerian Universities. Anyaogu and Iyabo (2014) used 414 out of 905 lecturers from 16 Faculties of Law in Nigerian Universities as the sample. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression analysis for statistical analysis of the data obtained using a questionnaire, the findings of the study indicated that demographic variables such as age, designation, and years of experience have significant positive relationship with research productivity of law lecturers. A related study by Quadri (2013) sought to ascertain the influence of demographic factors on use of online library resources by undergraduate students in two private Nigerian university libraries. Using frequency, percentage and Spearman rho to analyze the data generated through a questionnaire, the researcher reported the findings of the study that age and level of study had significant relationship with utilization of online library resources; while gender and religion had no significant relationship with use of online library resources. In another study, Maliki and Uche (2007) sought to determine the relationship between students' background variables and the utilization of library resources among secondary school students in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State. They used a nineteen item authors-developed Student's Background Questionnaire (SBQ) and twenty two item Students' Utilization of Library Resource Scale (SULIRES) to gather data. The findings of the study as reported by the authors indicated that students' background variables are significantly related to, as well as significantly predict their utilization of library resource.

The above review has established the gap to conduct an equivalent study in the university with the first year undergraduates as the target population. The present study therefore sought to establish if demographic variables of first year undergraduates like age, gender and area of specialization can predict their use of the library. Identifying such relationship would help the counsellors to know where to focus their attention when counselling the first year students on the use of the library.

2. Research purposes and questions

Four research questions, which were derived from the purposes of the study, guided the study. The study aimed at establishing the influence of demographic variables of first year undergraduates on their use of the library in the University of Calabar. Specifically, the study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of use of the library by first year undergraduates?
2. How does the first year undergraduates' use of the library differ based on age?
3. How does the first year undergraduates' use of the library differ based on gender?
4. How does the first year undergraduates' use of the library differ based on area of specialization?

3. Hypotheses

Three hypotheses, tested at alpha level of .05, were formulated to guide this study. These non directional hypotheses included the proposition that:

Ho 1. There is no significant difference, based on age, amongst first year undergraduates' use of the library

Ho 2. There is no significant difference, based on gender, amongst first year undergraduates' use of the library.

Ho 3. There is no significant difference in the use of the library by first year undergraduates based on their area of specialization.

4. Methodology

This study adopted a survey design, and was situated in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The population of the study included 2,398 first year undergraduates of the University of Calabar, who were registered users of the University Library in the 2013/14 academic session. A sample of 50 registered first year users were randomly

selected from each of the 10 faculties/colleges of the University, giving a total sample size of 500 first year undergraduates.

An instrument called Predictors of Usage Questionnaire (PUQ), developed by the researchers, was used in data gathering. The questionnaire was validated by two librarians and a professional counsellor. The reliability was established by administering the questionnaire on 30 first year undergraduates who were not part of the sample used for the study. Cronbach alpha of .84 was established, thus the instrument was considered reliable. The questionnaire had two sections. Section A sought to gather demographic information about the respondents while section B was an 11-item section which sought to establish the extent of use of the library by the first year undergraduates. The section B had a four point Likert-like scale response options; these included “two times or more a week,” “once a week,” “once in two weeks,” and “once a month or less.” These options were scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. In interpretation, “two times or more a week” implied Very High Extent (VHE); “once a week” meant High Extent (HE); “once in two weeks” meant Low Extent (LE) while “once a month or less” implied Very Low Extent (VLE). If the mean score fell between 0.50 and 1.49, it indicated Very Low Extent, 1.50 – 2.49 implied Low Extent, 2.50 – 3.49 meant High Extent while 3.50 – 4.49 indicated Very High Extent.

The instrument was administered directly to the respondents but using the librarians who served as the research assistants. The librarians tracked the first year undergraduates that visited the library right from the point of entry where users had to identify themselves. The questionnaire was then administered to them until 50 users were given in each of the faculties/colleges of the university. The generated data was analyzed using mean, standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions; t-test was used in testing hypothesis II, while ANOVA was used in testing hypotheses I and III.

5. Presentation and discussion of results

The results of the study with respect to the research questions and the hypotheses that guided the study are hereby presented. The table 1 below indicates the demographic variables of the first year undergraduates who took part in the study.

Table 1: Distribution of the valid questionnaire returned based on demographic variables

VARIABLES		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age	16 – 20	140	30%
	21 – 25	264	57%
	Above 25	63	13%
	TOTAL	467	
Gender	Male	253	54%
	Female	214	46%
	TOTAL	467	
Area of specialization	Agriculture	45	90%
	Arts	50	100%
	Education	50	100%
	Law	50	100%
	Management Science	50	100%
	Science	50	100%
	Social Science	50	100%
	Basic Medical Sciences	39	78%
	Allied Medical Sciences	50	100%
	Clinical Sciences	33	66%
	TOTAL	467	93.4%

5.1 Research question one: What is the extent of use of the library by first year undergraduates?

This question sought to establish the extent of use of the library by first year undergraduates. The table 2 below gives the summary of results in respect of this research question.

Table 2: The mean and standard deviation on the extent of use of the library by first year undergraduates

S/N	DESCRIPTION	N	Mean	SD	DECISION
In your first year in the University of Calabar, how often did you visit/use the university library for the under-listed purposes?					
1	To research and get materials for writing academic assignment or term paper.	467	3.04	1.19	High Extent
2	To study and read generally on your area of specialization or discipline.	467	3.45	0.99	High Extent
3	To prepare for test and examination.	467	3.46	1.00	High Extent
4	To do a general reading on any topic of interest.	467	2.72	1.18	High Extent
5	To consult the encyclopedia, dictionary or other materials in the reference section.	467	1.90	1.11	Low Extent
6	To read the newspapers and magazines.	467	1.60	1.00	Low Extent
7	To read novels and recreational/entertaining literature.	467	1.54	0.95	Low Extent
8	To use the library just as a reading room to study your own materials.	467	3.27	1.10	High Extent
9	To use the e-library section to access other e-libraries.	467	1.67	1.05	Low Extent
10	To explore the internet generally.	467	1.85	1.12	Low Extent
11	In an average, how often did you visit/use the library in your first year in the University of Calabar	467	3.38	1.00	High Extent
Summary of results for the cluster		467	2.53	1.32	High Extent

The results indicate that the extent of usage of the library by the first year undergraduates is generally high as the cluster mean is 2.53. However, the results also indicate that some of the indices measured showed low extent of usage. Such indices include consulting encyclopedia and the dictionary at the reference section, reading newspapers and magazines, and reading novels and recreational literature. Other areas of low extent of patronage include e-library and general exploration of the internet at the library.

5.2 Research question two: How does the first year undergraduates' use of the library differ based on age?

The second research question sought to establish if the first year undergraduates' use of the library differs based on age. The result is presented on the table below.

Table 3: The mean and standard deviation on the use of the library by first year undergraduates based on age

Groups	N	Mean	SD
16 – 20 years	140	2.55	1.32
21 – 25 years	264	2.49	1.32
Above 25 years	63	2.66	1.31

The mean on the table 3 indicates differences amongst the different age groups. But for such difference to be established as being statistically significant or otherwise, the hypothesis related to this question was tested. The result of such test is presented on table 4.

5.3 *Hypothesis one*: There is no significant difference, based on age, amongst first year undergraduates' use of the library

Table 4: ANOVA of significance of difference in the mean score on the first year undergraduates' use of the library based on age

	Sum of squares	Mean Square	df	F	f _{critical}	p	α	Decision	Inference
Between groups	16.59	8.28	2						
Within groups	8947.82	1.74	5134	4.75	3.00	0.01	.05	Reject H ₀	Difference is significant
Total	8964.39		5136						

According to the result of the analysis presented on this table, it is evident that there is a significant difference amongst the different age groups on the use of the library by the first year undergraduates. Age is therefore a predictor of library use by first year undergraduates. This finding agrees with the finding of Animasahun and Oludemi (2013) who reported that age was a significant correlate of organizational commitment. It also agreed with Quadri (2013) who reported in a study that age had a significant relationship with utilization of online library resources by undergraduates.

5.4 *Research question three*: How does the first year undergraduates' use of the library differ based on gender?

The third research question was interested on gender as a variable that can predict the usage of the university library by the first year undergraduates. The results of the analysis done with respect to this research question are as presented on table 5.

Table 5: The mean and standard deviation on the first year undergraduates' use of the library based on gender

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Males	253	2.53	1.32	
Females	214	2.54	1.32	0.01

It is evident from the presented result that there is a mean difference of 0.01 between male and female first year undergraduates on their use of the library. However, to ascertain whether this difference is due to chance or not, the generated data was further analysed by testing hypothesis two of the study. The result is as presented below.

5.5 *Hypothesis two*: There is no significant difference, based on gender, amongst first year undergraduates' use of the library.

Table 6: t-test of significance of difference in the mean score on the first year undergraduates' use of the library based on gender

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t	t _{critical}	p	α	Decision	Inference
Males	253	2.53	1.32	465	0.46	1.96	0.65	.05	Accept H ₀	Difference is not significant
Females	214	2.54	1.32							

The presented results prompted the retention of the null hypothesis. This is because the exact probability is greater than the alpha just as the calculated t is less than the critical t value. It can therefore be safely concluded that gender is not a predictor of first year undergraduates' use of the library. This however disagrees with the finding of Animasahun and Oludemi (2013) who reported that gender has correlation, though negative, with organizational commitment.

5.6 *Research question four*: How does the first year undergraduates' use of the library differ based on area of specialization?

This research question considered the 10 faculties of the University of Calabar and sought to determine if the Faculty that the first year undergraduates belong to influences their use of the library. The table below presents the summary of results in respect of research question 4.

Table 7: The mean and standard deviation on the first year undergraduates' use of the library based on area of specialization

Groups	N	Mean	SD
Agriculture	45	2.49	1.21
Arts	50	2.59	1.32
Education	50	2.70	1.25
Law	50	2.69	1.29
Management Science	50	2.74	1.29
Science	50	2.64	1.36
Social Science	50	2.36	1.35
Basic Medical Sciences	39	2.34	1.34
Allied Medical Sciences	50	2.45	1.37
Clinical Sciences	33	2.15	1.32

It can be seen from the results presented above that there are differences in the computed means of the faculties. This was subsequently reduced to further testing to allow for an authoritative conclusion on the influence of area of specialization on first year undergraduates' use of the library. The result of testing of hypothesis 3 takes care of this further testing.

5.7 *Hypothesis three*: There is no significant difference in the use of the library by first year undergraduates based on their area of specialization.

Table 8: ANOVA of significance of difference in the mean score on the first year undergraduates' use of the library based on area of specialization

	Sum of squares	Mean Square	df	F	$f_{critical}$	p	α	Decision	Inference
Between groups	148.58	16.51	9						
Within groups	8815.81	1.72	5127	9.60	3.00	0.00	.05	Reject H_0	Difference is significant
Total	8964.39		5136						

The presented result indicates a glaring and significant difference amongst the faculties in the first year undergraduates' use of the library. It can therefore be authoritatively concluded that area of specialization is a predictor of first year undergraduates' use of the library. This agrees with the findings of Maliki and Uche (2007) that students' background variables are significantly related to, as well as significantly predict their utilization of library resource.

6. Summary of major findings

The summary of major finding of the study is as follows:

1. The extent of use of the library by the first year undergraduates is high.
2. There is a significant difference, based on age, amongst first year undergraduates' use of the library. Age is therefore a predictor of first year undergraduates' use of the library.
3. There is no significant difference, based on gender, amongst first year undergraduates' use of the library. Gender, therefore, does not predict the first year undergraduates' use of the library.
4. There is a significant difference in the use of the library by first year undergraduates based on their area of specialization. Area of specialization is therefore a predictor of first year undergraduates' use of the library.

7. Counselling implications and recommendations

The findings of this study have implications for the counsellor and other stakeholders in the teaching-learning process. It is no news that counsellors have the unenviable task of helping the students in the teaching-learning process to function optimally and be successful. Such optimal functioning and success cannot be isolated from reading, and making effective use of the library. Findings of this study have indicated that the extent of use of the library by the first year undergraduates is high. This is good but not the best as there was "very high" as a possible outcome. Counsellors should therefore help the students to develop reading culture and make the best out of university education. Furthermore, areas of specialization and age have been reported as predictors of first year undergraduates' use of the library, while gender is not a predictor. Counsellors should therefore consider age and specialization variables while devising strategies to help the students to imbibe good reading culture. The result of the study on gender factor implies that what affects the males also has effect on the females. Both gender should therefore be considered in whatever intervention is being plan to help the student to make effective use of the library and acquire a healthy study habit. Area of specialization has been identified as a predictor of first year undergraduates' use of the library without specifying which area of specialization does better than the other. Further research should focus on this with an aim of specifying which area of specialization encourages undergraduates' use of the library more than the other.

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